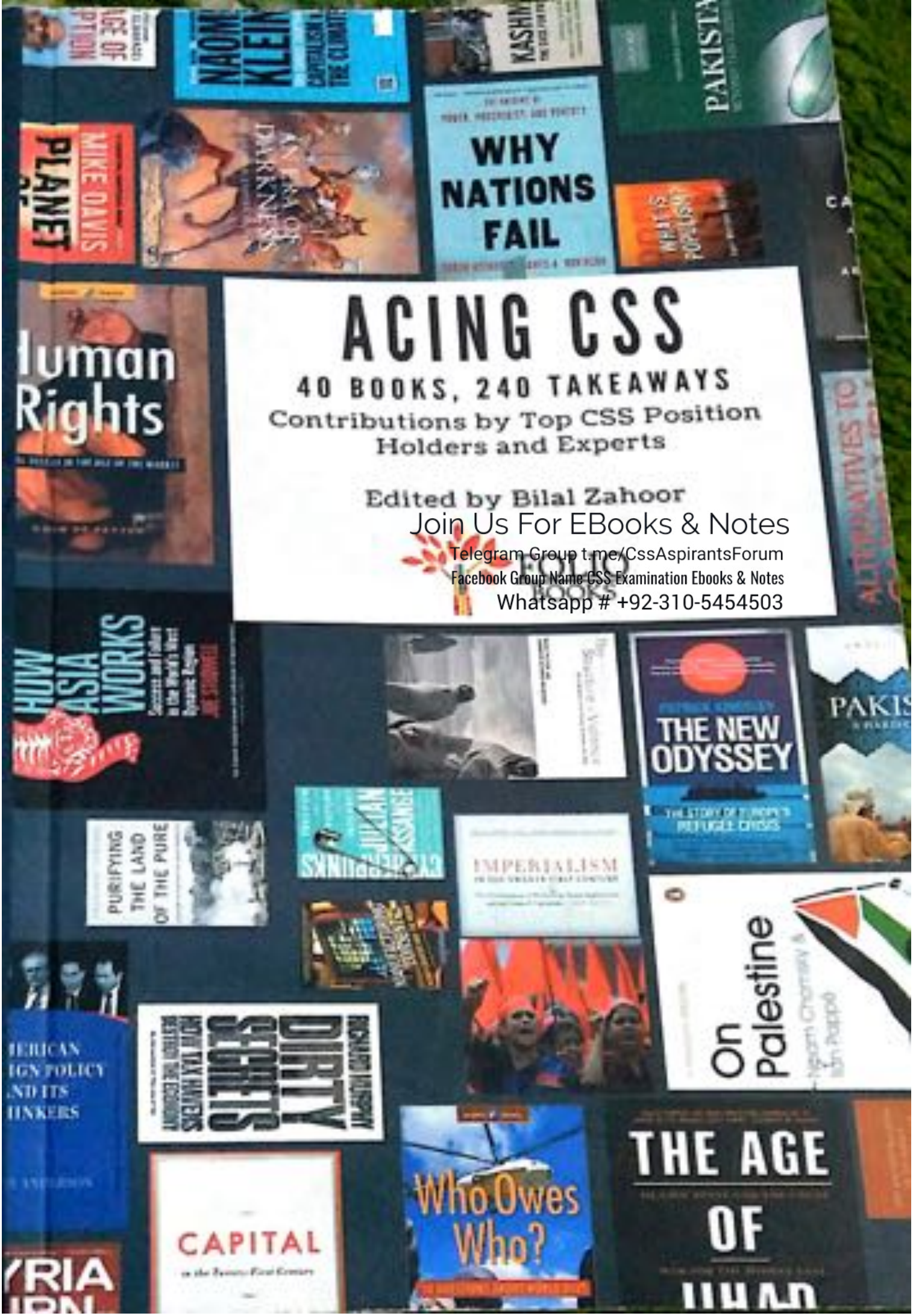

Scanned by CamScanner

Acing CSS

40 Books, 240 Takeaways

Contributions by Top CSS Position Holders and Experts

Sepical Thanks To Syra Iqbal

Edited by Bilal Zahoor

Join Us For EBooks & Notes
Telegram Group t.me/CssAspirantsForum
Facebook Group Name CSS Examination Ebooks & Notes
Whatsapp # +92-310-5454503

Scanned by CamScanner

Contents

Acknowledgements xi

Preface xiii

Introduction: How Will This Book Help You Ace CSS? xv

1. Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty 1
2. An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India 15
3. What is Populism? 23
4. How Asia Works: Success and Failure in the World's Most Dynamic Region 29
5. Kashmir: The Case for Freedom 39
6. This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate 49
7. The Nordic Model of Social Democracy 55
8. On Palestine 65
9. Syria Burning: ISIS and the Death of the Arab Spring 71

Scanned by CamScanner

10.	The Age Of Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times	77
11.	Dirty Secrets: How Tax Havens Destroy the Economy	83
12.	Human Rights: Social Justice in the Age of Market	91
13.	Capitalism: A Ghost Story	101
14.	Pakistan: A Hard Country	107
15.	American Foreign Policy and Its Thinkers	113
16.	Capital in the Twenty-First Century	123
17.	The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics	129
18.	Men Explain Things to Me	137
19.	The God Market: How Globalization is Making India More Hindu	141
20.	Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century: Globalization, Super-Exploitation and Capitalism's Final Crisis	145
21.	Kingdom of the Unjust: Behind the U.S.-Saudi Connection	149
22.	Who Owes Who: 50 Questions about World Debt	155
23.	Islamic Leviathan: Islam and the Making of State Power	163
24.	The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis	169
25.	The Inevitable: Understanding the 12	175

Scanned by CamScanner

Technological Forces That Will Shape Our Future
26. America's Addiction to Terrorism 183
27. Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan's Religious Minorities 189
28. Planet of Slums 195
29. The Age of Jihad: Islamic State and the Great War for the Middle East 201
30. Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life 209
31. The Mosaic of Islam: A Conversation with Perry Anderson 217
32 We Should All Be Feminists 225
33. Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media 229
34. Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet 235
35. Pakistan's Enduring Challenges 241
36. The Hidden Structure of Violence: Who Benefits from Global Violence and War 249
37. Requiem for the American Dream: The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth & Power 255
38. The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam 263
39. Pakistan: Beyond the Crisis State 271
40. Alternatives to Capitalism: Proposals for a Democratic Economy 281
References 287

Scanned by CamScanner

Introduction: How Will This Book Help You Ace CSS?

As the name depicts, Acing CSS is a book that would turn out to be the single most crucial source in the journey of qualifying CSS Competitive Examinations. The book covers a wide range of subjects, concepts and debates, which when combined will help the readers build the knowledge base necessarily needed for acing the CSS examinations. Starting from the Essay paper, how will the book help you in resolving this conundrum?

Based on the knowledge that owes a lot to the prowess of top position holders of CSS and the honourable professors who are known for essay writing, it is discerned that the Essay paper is essentially about reflecting informed opinions and quality arguments about a particular topic coupled with an advanced writing expression. To that end, this book will provide the aspirants with fundamental knowledge about topics ranging from all the important current international and national affairs to economic and

Scanned by CamScanner

political systems adopted by different countries, while also helping them get familiar with various layers of arguments. For instance, the third chapter in the book, which is about Muller's *What is Populism?*, covers almost all of the aspects of populism in a concise manner, a topic that has become extremely relevant with the rise of populist leaders like Donald Trump, Geert Wilders, Nigel Farage and Narendera Modi amongst others.

Another example is of the first chapter in the book, which delineates the reasons behind the success and failure of different nations with reference to Acemoglu's and Robinson's *Why Nations Fail*. The chapter answers: what role the nature of institutions (inclusive or extractive) plays in determining the fate of a nation; what the ingredients of inclusive institutions are; what role critical junctures play in changing the balance of society; and how virtuous and vicious circles decide the course a particular nation will likely follow. These takeaways can be applied to the success and failure of a multitude of nations and can be appropriately used while answering an Essay question pertaining to the rise and fall (or stagnation) of different nations. Talking of the success stories of growing economies of the world, the book has two other chapters on this subject (chapter 4 and 7) in addition to chapter 1, narrating the success of North-East Asian and Nordic economies respectively.

Next comes climate change. It is one of the biggest threats to the world with South Asian countries being more vulnerable than others. The book, therefore, includes a great deal of information about this peril along with the needed policy measures to be found

Scanned by CamScanner

in various chapters. Chapter 6, which has been written with reference to Naomi Klein's work, specifically deals with climate change as a phenomenon instigated by neoliberalism.

Terrorism, despite being the most covered issue, is still a topic troubling most candidates because of the complexity attached to it. Keeping this in mind, scores of chapters (chapter 9, 15, 21, 26, 29, 31 and 35) have been written on the topic, taking into account the dynamics of foreign policy, international alliances, religion and other factors that are inevitably intertwined with it.

As it has been closely observed over the years that the Essay paper frequently includes a topic or two regarding technology and its implications, the book comprises three chapters (chapter 25, 30 and 34) on this area of study, written with reference to the works of authors who have enviable mastery on the subject of technology.

Considering the growing wealth concentration in the world and the subsequent menace of power concentration, the book addresses the fundamental problems of neoliberal capitalism and economic globalisation with reference to case studies of different countries, while also informing the readers about the alternatives. Several chapters (chapter 6, 12, 13, 16, 19, 20, 28, 37 and 40) have been written in this regard to let the aspirants have a thorough knowledge about the issues neoliberalism revolves around.

Contemplating the upsurge in human rights violations in the age of the market and anti-pluralism, plenty of chapters (chapter 5, 8, 9, 12 and 28) have been written to attend to the the plight of

Scanned by CamScanner

people living in Kashmir, Palestine, Syria and other third world countries.

The woes of Pakistan have been addressed in a number of chapters including chapter 14, 17, 23, 27, 35 and 39. The book also holds the history of Islam, the origin and implications of the Shi'a-Sunni divide and the major discourses circulating around Islam in today's world in the form of three chapters (chapter 23, 31 and 38).

Other important topics the book encompasses are foreign aid, British imperialism in India, nuclear proliferation, nuclear disarmament, tax havens and offshore industry, American foreign policy, feminism, refugee crisis, urbanisation and political economy of mass media amongst others.

In a nutshell, the book has perhaps everything that relates to the Essay paper. The aspirants can use the content as well as quotes from different authors (which have been cited properly) while answering the Essay question. These chapters are not essays of course, but they have sufficient perspectives which can be understood and applied to a broad range of topics.

Similarly, the knowledge base this book seeks to develop can be instrumental in scoring well in a number of other subjects. Perhaps it has its utility in all of them in one way or the other, but the subjects towards which the book contributes immensely are Current Affairs, Pakistan Affairs, International Relations, Political Science, Economics, Islamic Studies, Sociology, Governance and Public Policies and Journalism.

Scanned by CamScanner

1

Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty

By Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson

About the Authors

Daron Acemoglu is a Turkish-American economist, currently working as the Elizabeth and James Killian Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He is one of the most cited and renowned economists of the world and has written several scholarly papers and books. His fields of interest include political economy, economic growth, income inequality, human capital development and labour economics.

James Robinson is a prominent British economist and political scientist who studied from the same institute as Acemoglu, that is, London School of Economics (LSE) and is currently a Dr. Richard L. Pearson Professor of Global Conflict Studies at the University of Chicago. His interests range from political economy and comparative politics to economic and political development.

Join Us For EBooks & Notes
Telegram Group t.me/CssAspirantsForum
Facebook Group Name CSS Examination Ebooks & Notes
Whatsapp # +92-310-5458503
Scanned by CamScanner

Overview

Drawing on the case studies of several countries, Acemoglu and Robinson illustrate the reasons for the failure of some of them and the success of others. The authors reveal that how certain nations overcame poverty and set forth a path toward success and prosperity. In contrast, nations which failed to follow such a path were the ones in control of powerful elites – *"disinterested in achieving prosperity"*, preventing innovation and supporting 'extractive institutions'. The book revolves around the concepts of inclusive and extractive institutions and emphasises that it is the type of institutions a nation holds that sets the course of its progress. Simply put, 'inclusive institutions' yield prosperity and 'extractive institutions' are strongly correlated with poverty. In other words, *Why Nations Fail* answers how *"political and economic institutions interact in causing poverty or prosperity"*. Moreover, the authors dismiss factors such as geography and culture while analyzing the history of various countries and argue that it is only the nature of institutions and the circles they generate – 'virtuous' or 'vicious' – that matter.

Six Takeaways

Nature of Political and Economic Institutions Determine the Fate of a Nation

The fence cutting the city of Nogales in two halves tells an eye-opening story about the state of affairs on either side. To the north of it lays the US city of Nogales, Arizona and to its south rests the Mexican city of Nogales, Sonora. It is the same city with people

Scanned by CamScanner

belonging to the same race, having similar geography and climate. Yet there is a sharp contrast between the living conditions of the two sets of people. People living on the Arizona side enjoy high life expectancy, access to education, healthcare, electricity and other utilities, and *"the income of the average household there is about $30,000 a year"* (Acemoglu and Robinson, p. 7). Contrarily, the Mexican side of Nogales lives in abysmal conditions. The *"income of the average household there is about one-third that in Nogales, Arizona"* (p. 7). People suffer from chronic diseases, have no access to quality healthcare, education and other public amenities, have poor life expectancy and are faced with street crimes every now and then. On every front, the Mexican side lags miles behind the US side. This enormous difference is not a result of geographical or cultural dissimilarities but a consequence of living in *"...a different world shaped by different institutions"* (p. 9). In the authors' words:

> The reason that Nogales, Arizona, is much richer than Nogales, Sonora, is simple: it is because of the very different institutions on the two sides of the border, which create very different incentives for the inhabitants of Nogales, Arizona, versus Nogales, Sonora. (p. 42)

Besides Nogales, Acemoglu and Robinson give examples of other bordering countries and show a great deal of interest in the evolution of their institutions. This peculiar way of analyzing the institutions of countries bordering each other and delving into the reasons causing prosperity or poverty in the respective countries is quite apt, primarily because when all geographical, cultural and climatic conditions are similar, it becomes easy to pinpoint the

Scanned by CamScanner

institutional differences leading to strikingly different economic and political outcomes.

Countries lying on the either side of the 38th parallel (South Korea and North Korea) are another example the authors seem to be interested in. Just like Nogales, Korea was once united. The post-World War II period, however, saw a split in the region, with North Korea going under the influence of Russia and South Korea being administered by the US. Both countries took a start at the same time and had similar demographic and geographical conditions, but *"by the late 1990s, in just about half a century, South Korean growth and North Korean stagnation led to a tenfold gap between the two halves of this once-united country"* (p. 73). The answer to the question pertaining to such enormous difference in economic growth and living conditions lies in the nature of institutions. North Korea, since 1945, has been ruled by dictators who did not let the institutions develop and made sure that all the educational, socio-economic and political institutions function in accordance with the ambition of the dictators to rule for as long as they possibly can. Consequently, the freedom to own property, pursue private business, express opinion and disagree with the state policies has been non-existent. On the other hand, South Korea adopted a sharply different course and not just invested in education and healthcare, but also provided a feasible environment for entrepreneurs to initiate their own businesses. The state backed the private businesses, while simultaneously making sure that providing

Scanned by CamScanner

utilities like electricity, telephone, education and healthcare were its own responsibility.

Over time, the institutions developed, and in a span of just a few decades South Korea was not only able to spend large portions of budget on human capital development, but also attracted massive amounts of foreign investment as a result of increasing the ease of doing business in the region. The situation today is such that South Korea is one of the most developed economies of the world, albeit not free from the menace of economic inequality, and North Korea is a pariah state immersed in poverty, committing grave human rights abuses. Summing up the situation in the authors' words:

> The people of South Korea have living standards similar to those of Portugal and Spain. To the north, in the so called Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea, living standards are akin to those of a sub-Saharan African country, about one-tenth of average living standards in South Korea. The health of North Koreans is in an even worse state; the average North Korean can expect to live ten years less than his cousins south of the 38th parallel. (p. 71)

Based on the above-mentioned examples, it is easy to figure out that what lies at the heart of the success of US and South Korea and the failure of Mexico and North Korea, or for that matter the entire sub-Saharan Africa and several countries in Asia, is the nature of institutions. It is the very nature of institutions – *'inclusive'* or *'extractive'* – that defines the course of any nation's

Scanned by CamScanner

destiny. As penned by the authors, *"Countries differ in their economic success because of their different institutions, the rules influencing how the economy works, and the incentives that motivate people."* (p. 73)

Inclusive Institutions: A Mix of Pluralism and Centralisation

As opposed to 'extractive institutions' revolving around absolutism, 'inclusive institutions' are based on the notion of pluralism (a concept based on diversity and tolerance, suggesting peaceful co-existence of different groups in a society having different beliefs and opinions). What this essentially means is that the power does not rest with a few individuals or groups; instead, a broad coalition is formed to make sure that every group of a society has a fair and proportional share in the power spectrum. In case of the absence of pluralism in a political and economic setting, inclusive institutions cannot emerge, and, thus, there is a great likelihood that the grievances of a number of groups would remain unaddressed. As the authors note, *"Without some sort of pluralism, there would be a danger that one of the diverse interests would usurp power at the expense of the rest"* (p. 211).

Pluralism is obviously the cornerstone of inclusive institutions, but it cannot forge inclusive institutions in the absence of powerful or centralised states. If the state is not powerful and cannot enforce rule of law, chaos and lawlessness become inevitable. Somalia is a befitting example here. History shows that political power in Somalia *"has long been widely distributed – almost pluralistic"* (p. 80), but the country has not experienced any

Scanned by CamScanner

form of inclusive institutions so far. This is solely because the state lacks a centralized authority. In the authors' words:

> Indeed there is no real authority that can control or sanction what anyone does. Society is divided into deeply antagonistic clans that cannot dominate one another. The power of one clan is constrained only by the guns of another. This distribution of power leads not to inclusive institutions but to chaos, and at the root of it is the Somali state's lack of any kind of political centralization, or state centralization, and its inability to enforce even the minimal amount of law and order to support economic activity, trade, or even the basic security of its citizens. (p. 80)

The recipe of inclusive institutions, thus, has two ingredients: pluralism and centralization.

The Pecking Order of Political and Economic Institutions

Politics is a process that determines the rules of governance, which in turn determine what kind of economic institutions a country would embrace. Since the power of devising economic policies rests with the political representatives, it is politics that forge economics. The reason we find different kinds of economic institutions in different countries is the difference in the prevalent political institutions. US-style political institutions, which are based on pluralism and state centralisation, would set the stage for inclusive economic institutions to prosper. On the other hand, political institutions in North Korea or colonial Barbados would give rise to economic institutions that are purely extractive, serving the interests of few individuals or groups. So, when it comes to

Scanned by CamScanner

political and economic institutions, the former leads the pecking order. In the words of Acemoglu and Robinson:

> Political institutions determine who has power in society and to what ends that power can be used. If the distribution of power is narrow and unconstrained, then the political institutions are absolutist, as exemplified by the absolutist monarchies reigning throughout the world during much of history. Under absolutist political institutions such as those in North Korea and colonial Latin America, those who can wield this power will be able to set up economic institutions to enrich themselves and augment their power at the expense of society. In contrast, political institutions that distribute power broadly in society and subject it to constraints are pluralistic. Instead of being vested in a single individual or a narrow group, political power rests with a broad coalition or a plurality of groups. (p. 80)

What stands out from the discussion is that political institutions are the real game-changers. There is not even an iota of doubt in the fact that it is the economic institutions that determine the growth of an economy and, thus, the prosperity of a nation, but the question arises that how exactly such economic institutions come into being. The answer lies in the political will and the nature of political institutions, simply because the power to determine economic scenarios and put in place a particular economic system emanates from with the political institutions.

Critical Junctures: Changing the Balance in a Society

The authors define 'critical juncture' as *"a major event or confluence of factors disrupting the existing economic or*

Scanned by CamScanner

political balance in society" (p. 101). Every nation has witnessed one or more critical junctures in the course of its history. These events are crucial enough to alter the structure and working mechanism of political and economic institutions, as seen in England in the middle of the fourteenth century when a catastrophic event called 'The Bubonic plague' or 'The Black Death' changed the dynamics of the labour market. *"The plague wiped out about half of the population"* (p. 96) of England, with the result that the landowners and capitalists faced severe shortage of the peasants and labourers. The labour force, thus, capitalized on the situation and started asking for more rights and empowerment, eventually pushing England towards inclusiveness. The event was so critical that it altered the whole structure of institutions, albeit in a gradual manner, and, thus, the journey of England towards building inclusive political and economic institutions started.

Contrarily, Eastern Europe took an altogether different course. Instead of giving labourers and peasants more rights and making institutions inclusive in the wake of labour scarcity, the landlords came up with *"a greater incentive to keep the labor market extractive and the peasants servile"* (p. 100).

What protrudes from the above-mentioned examples is that same critical juncture occurring in different regions can lead to completely different outcomes. Another takeaway is that critical junctures cannot necessarily *"lead to a successful political revolution or to change for the better"* (p. 111). History is full of examples of revolutions not leading to anywhere but just replacing one tyrannical rule with another. Many of the colonial states after

Scanned by CamScanner

getting independence from European imperialists in the post-World War II period experienced critical juncture. From Asia to Africa, dozens of former colonies had the opportunity to embrace inclusiveness, but none except Botswana could pave the way for a political and economic change.

The Virtuous Circle: How Inclusive Institutions Create Positive Feedback Loops

Having discussed how inclusive institutions emerge, the next question that arises is why they persist. The reason is the 'virtuous circle' – *"A powerful process of positive feedback that preserves these institutions in the face of attempts at undermining them and, in fact, sets in motion forces that lead to greater inclusiveness"* (p. 308). Once inclusive institutions develop in a particular political setting, it becomes very difficult for a group of individuals to exercise control at the expense of others. Because *"inclusive institutions are based on constraints on the exercise of power and on a pluralistic distribution of political power in society"*, no subset can *"impose its will on others without any constraints"* (p. 308). Whenever a group of people or an institution seeks to exercise political power beyond its jurisdiction, the wisdom of rule of law kicks in and the inclusiveness of institutions remains preserved.

The prevalence of rule of law coupled with pluralism, thus, sets a chain of events in motion that creates even greater inclusiveness. This interaction of positive forces seeking to preserve inclusiveness occurs in a cyclic manner and has been called

Scanned by CamScanner

'virtuous circle' by the authors. But there is more to it. The fact that inclusive political institutions complement inclusive economic institutions also plays a major role in the persistence of inclusiveness. In the authors' words:

> The virtuous circle arises not only from the inherent logic of pluralism and the rule of law, but also because inclusive political institutions tend to support inclusive economic institutions. This then leads to a more equal distribution of income, empowering a broad segment of society and making the political playing field even more level. This limits what one can achieve by usurping political power and reduces the incentives to re-create extractive political institutions. These factors were important in the emergence of truly democratic political institutions in Britain. (p. 309)

The Vicious Circle: How Extractive Institutions Create Negative Feedback Loops

'Vicious circle', as opposed to 'virtuous circle, involves a process in which extractive institutions generate *"negative feedback loops"* which in turn ensure the longevity of these institutions. As the name suggests, once the 'vicious circle' develops, it becomes very difficult to break the cyclic interaction of negative forces. Because the benefits attached to the longevity of the circle are so huge for the stakeholders involved, they leave no stone unturned and often make concerted efforts in resisting forces seeking a change. These few stakeholders, thus, constantly collaborate to gain more wealth and power at the expense of the majority.

Scanned by CamScanner

The process starts with the onset of extractive political institutions. As unbridled power is characteristic of such institutions, rulers take full use of the opportunity and gain more power, control and wealth. To that end, they create extractive economic institutions working in tandem with extractive political institutions. The following excerpt from the book captures the essence of the 'vicious cycle'.

> Extractive political institutions lead to extractive economic institutions, which enrich a few at the expense of many. Those who benefit from extractive institutions thus have the resources to build their (private) armies and mercenaries, to buy their judges, and to rig their elections in order to remain in power. They also have every interest in defending the system. Therefore, extractive economic institutions create the platform for extractive political institutions to persist. Power is valuable in regimes with extractive political institutions, because power is unchecked and brings economic riches. (p. 343)

Vicious circles are as old as political regimes, but in the modern history of the world, their creation rests with European imperialists. From Africa to Asia, European colonizers created institutions intended to serve their own interests. Though they eventually left, but the legacy remains alive even today. The entire region of Africa in general and Sierra Leone in particular are pertinent examples in this regard. *"During the colonial period, the British used a system of indirect rule to govern Sierra Leone, as they did with most of their African colonies"* (p. 337). At the heart of this system lie three things. First is the creation of

Scanned by CamScanner

paramount chiefs – individuals who were hired to collect taxes and keep order. Second is the introduction of marketing boards, an authority whose purpose was to control the price dynamics vis-à-vis agricultural produce, making sure that the large sums of profit go to the British government with farmers barely surviving. Third is setting up a monopoly over the extraction of minerals in the form of trusts. All of these institutions, purely extractive in nature, were established by the British solely to meet their economic and political objectives.

The British left Sierra Leone in 1961, but because a vicious circle had arisen by then, the extractive institutions continued to haunt the society for decades, much to the dismay of those who expected that the independence would also set them free from the shackles of the British institutions. The paramount chiefs are still intact in the country and so are the marketing boards. The legacy, thus, turned out to be insurmountable and is summed up in the following words of the authors.

> Sierra Leone's development, or lack thereof, could be best understood as the outcome of the vicious circle. British colonial authorities built extractive institutions in the first place, and the postindependence African politicians were only too happy to take up the baton for themselves. The pattern was eerily similar all over sub-Saharan Africa. There were similar hopes for postindependence Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, and many other African countries. Yet in all these cases, extractive institutions were re-created in a pattern predicted by the vicious circle – only they became more vicious as time went by. In all these countries, for example, the British creation of marketing boards and indirect rule were sustained. (p. 343)

Scanned by CamScanner

It is also important to note that since extractive institutions render unconstrained power to the rulers, the desire to rule increases remarkably. In quest of gaining the uninhibited power, groups do not shy away from engaging in violent activities. In other words, *"extractive institutions create incentives for infighting in order to control power and its benefits"* (p. 344). The infighting might then take the form of civil wars, as manifested in cases of Sierra Leone, *"Angola, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Republic of Congo Brazzaville, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda"* (p. 344). The viciousness of this circle – created by extractive institutions – can be gauged by the fact that most of these African states have now turned into failed states.

Reference: Robinson, A. D., & Acemoglu, R. (2012). Why nations fail. *The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty, Nueva York*.

Scanned by CamScanner

2

An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India

By Shashi Tharoor

About the Author

Shashi Tharoor is an Indian politician, known worldwide for his views and talks on Indian politics, economics, human rights and international affairs. Apart from writing hundreds of columns and articles in prestigious publications, he is also an acclaimed writer having written 16 books including *The Great Indian Novel, Nehru: The Invention of India* and *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*. He is currently a Member of the Indian Parliament, serving since 2009.

Overview

'An Era of Darkness' by Shashi Tharoor is a discursive account of the tyrannies inflicted by the British on the colonized Indians based entirely on facts and figures. This book covers a wide range of subjects that include, but are not limited to, the advent of the East India Company and the shameless looting of the subcontinent, the introduction of the *"divide and conquer policy"* in

Scanned by CamScanner

the subcontinent which ultimately resulted in the formation of Pakistan and India, a detailed examination of the British education system in the subcontinent and cricket. It also takes into account false social realities and deconstructs them one by one. With statistical data at hand, Tharoor analyzes the extent of the social, political, cultural and economic damage the British inflicted upon the land of the artisans and poets.

Four Takeaways

The British Were Not the Benevolent Leaders We Thought They Were

According to Tharoor, it is about time we stopped crediting the British as excellent leaders. He states that the British, unlike the Mughals, never took the time to assimilate with different languages and cultures the subcontinent had to offer. Instead, they superimposed their own values and language on the vast cultural and linguistic diversity of the subcontinent. The British exploited, plundered, looted and stripped India off its inherent cultural roots through anglicization. Additionally, they established a bureaucratic system of governance which still haunts India like a spectre.

The history of the subcontinent reveals interesting aspects regarding the inter-communal ties Indians have been holding for centuries. To a large extent, the region was religiously tolerant before the colonization. It was only after the imperial rule that "*large-scale conflicts between Hindus and Muslims*" started (Tharoor, p. 129). Through their notorious 'divide and rule policy', Britain left India in a terrible abyss of disorder.

Scanned by CamScanner

Apart from giving rise to inter-faith conflicts, the British laid the seeds of economic exploitation, poverty, corruption, disruption and inequality in India through their Victorian values. Working like a typical cut-throat, socially irresponsible corporation (which does not take into account the health, welfare and other needs of the employees working for long hours in an unsafe production unit), the East India Company took India as a production facility and used Indians as worthless labourers. Tharoor sums up the conquest of India by the Company in the words of John Sullivan (East India Company's official).

> The little court disappears—trade languishes—the capital decays—the people are impoverished—the Englishman flourishes, and acts like a sponge, drawing up riches from the banks of the Ganges, and squeezing them down upon the banks of the Thames. (p. 27-28)

The Myth of Britain's Gifts to India — Railways and Education System — Needs to Be Debunked

It is still a popular belief in the subcontinent that the basic infrastructure laid down by the British benefitted the region. The Indian Railways, the education system and the introduction of the British Parliamentary System in the so-called medieval subcontinent are attributed to the British. Tharoor maintains that these systems were introduced only to keep a stronghold over the subcontinent and to facilitate and speed up the looting and exploiting of the region's resources. The Indian Railways is a classic example in this regard. As Tharoor notes:

Scanned by CamScanner

> The railways were intended principally to transport extracted resources – coal, iron ore, cotton and so on – to ports for the British to ship home to use in their factories. The movement of people was incidental, except when it served colonial interests; and the third-class compartments, with their wooden benches and total absence of amenities, into which Indians were herded, attracted horrified comment even at the time. (p.189)

The British *"made absurd amounts of money by investing in the railways"* (p. 188), but the Indians got nothing. Neither the travelling got easier for them nor were they *"employed in the railways"* (p. 189). They were not even allowed to benefit from the new technology and develop their own manufacturing capability. The Indian mechanics working at railway workshops *"became so adept that in 1878 they started designing and building their own locomotives"* (p. 191). Instead of encouraging local manufacturing, the British banned all such activities by 1912 and continued importing thousands of locomotives from England through the Indian tax-payers' money.

Equally baseless is the myth surrounding the education system introduced by the British. Tharoor argues that the British were never interested in educating the Indian masses as the cost was too high and the benefit too low. They rather used English language as an instrument of colonialism and taught it to a few who would *"serve as intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled"* (p. 196).

Scanned by CamScanner

Britain Turned a Rich and Resourceful Region into "a poster child of poverty"

The British left no stone unturned in their quest to gain economic benefits from the subcontinent. From overt looting to corruption and from dismantling the local industries to committing mass murders, British did everything they could to sustain the empire and, thus, economically exploit India. For instance, the East India Company used all its power to extort money from the Indians. To that end, it did not even hesitate to murder the locals. As Tharoor notes: *"Company exacted payments from Indians beyond what they could afford, and the rest had to be obtained by bribery, robbery and even murder"* (p. 34).

The magnitude of British looting can be more precisely measured by comparing the pre-Company India with the one under British Raj. Tharoor laments the incredible downfall India experienced as a result of imperial rule in the following words.

> We have seen how what had once been one of the richest and most industrialized economies of the world, which together with China accounted for almost 75 per cent of world industrial output in 1750, was transformed by the process of imperial rule into one of the poorest, most backward, illiterate and diseased societies on earth by the time of our independence in 1947. In 1600, when the East India Company was established, Britain was producing just 1.8 per cent of the world's GDP, while India was generating some 23 per cent. By 1940, after nearly two centuries of the Raj, Britain accounted for nearly 10 per cent of world GDP, while India had been

Scanned by CamScanner

> reduced to a poor 'third-world' country, destitute and starving, a global poster child of poverty and famine. (p. 223-224)

As mentioned above, the myths propounded by the apologists for empire vis-à-vis the education system and industrial developments need to be debunked. Under the British rule, the education system deteriorated enormously, the living conditions worsened, the local industries collapsed and poverty reached new heights.

> The British left a society with 16 per cent literacy, a life expectancy of 27, practically no domestic industry and over 90 per cent living below what today we would call the poverty line. (p. 224)

The Empire Left but the Legacy Did Not

Tharoor argues that even though Britain no longer rules India, but its presence in the form of neo-imperialism is still felt. It exists through the elite class which has subjected the masses to corporate domination. Globalization has ensured that people who were once colonized—now apparently free from imperial dominance—still remain in chains through modern-day capitalism. "*Empire might have gone, but it endures in the imitative elites it left behind in the developing world, the 'mimic men', in Naipaul's phrase*" (p. 242). On the surface, it looked as if imperialism had been defeated and colonized states went back to their own traditions by demolishing the imperial legacies, but that at best was a naïve understanding of decolonization. The people who lived under imperialism experienced multitude of changes which were

Scanned by CamScanner

irreversible. In a nutshell, people in subcontinent never got over imperial legacies, with the remnants of colonization still persisting through capitalistic practices.

> To Mishra and other left-leaning critics, it marks the triumph of materialist capitalism rather than Asian spiritualism; the Indian devil wears Prada too. (p. 242)

Reference: Tharoor, S. (2016).*An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*. Aleph Book Company. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

3

What is Populism?

By Jan-Werner Muller

About the Author

Jan-Werner Muller is a renowned political scientist. He has authored several books and is a regular contributor to prestigious publications like the Guardian and The New Yorker. Some of his works include *Contesting Democracy*, *Another Country*, *Constitutional Patriotism* and *What is Populism?* He currently teaches politics at Princeton University.

Overview

Presenting a scathing critique of right-wing politics in the United States and Europe, Muller answers some pertinent questions surrounding populism. This book defines populism, tells the readers what populist leaders do once they come to power, answers why populist politics is dangerous and proposes what can be done to counter populism. The book presents numerous claims that populism revolves around alongside the core claim of populists that "*only they*" represent the people and that all other political

Scanned by CamScanner

representatives are illegitimate. In doing so, it also dismisses the idea of considering left-wing popular leaders such as Bernie Sanders in the US and left-wing alliances like Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain as populists, as none of them ever claimed that they were the only representatives of people. With the phenomenon of populism being on the rise as a result of the popularity of politicians like Donald Trump (US), Marine Le Pen (France), Geert Wilders (Netherlands), Viktor Orbán (Hungary) and Nigel Farage (UK), a book of the likes of *What is Populism* has become enormously relevant.

Five Takeaways

What is Populism?

Muller defines populism as a system of politics that is elitist, exclusive, anti-pluralist, and even goes on to call it anti-democratic. He says that populism *"[...] is a particular moralistic imagination of politics, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified — but, I shall argue, ultimately fictional — people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior"* (Muller, p. 19). This is not to say that anyone who opposes elites is a populist, as keeping an eye on the affairs of the powerful or being critical to the elites is more or less essential for all citizens. What makes one a populist, *"in addition to being anti-elitist"*, is anti-pluralism, which underlies *"the claim that they, and only they, represent the people"* (p.19). The core claim that populism rests upon *"also implies that whoever does not really support populist parties*

Scanned by CamScanner

might not be part of the proper people" (p.19) and is likely to be called a traitor.

Populism: A Threat to Democracy

The core claim of populism, which is basically *"a moralized form of antipluralism"* (p. 19), is itself anti-democratic. *"Think of Nigel Farage celebrating the Brexit vote by claiming that it had been a "victory for real people""* (p. 20), implying that almost half (48 per cent) of the Britons who voted against exiting from European Union were not real people. Such exclusionary politics, which resembles authoritarianism a lot but has put on a sophisticated guise of democracy, can cause serious damage to democracy. Thus, emerges the need to revisit the core principles of democracy and then compare them with the claims of populism to discern if the latter contradicts the former. Democracy essentially *" [...] requires pluralism and the recognition that we need to find fair terms of living together as free, equal, but also irreducibly diverse citizens"* (p. 8). Contrarily, populism takes people as *"a homogeneous and morally unified body"* (p. 23-24) *"that can be authentically represented only by populists"* (p. 43), thus, disregarding diversity altogether and *"discrediting those who dissent from the populist leader's construal of the people"* (p. 37). A populist approach towards politics, therefore, can do irreparable damage to the fabric of democracy and the political machinery of a country.

How Populist Leadership Operates?

To get an idea of *"how populist leadership actually operates"* (p. 27), election slogans might help. From the slogan of

Scanned by CamScanner

the Austrian far-right populist politician Heinz-Christian Strache – "HE wants what WE want" – to Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again', populists seem to be raising slogans that essentially warn people of being excluded. Anyone who does not want what Strache wants might not be a real Austrian and *"anybody who opposes Trump must also somehow be against "American Greatness""* (p. 31).

This leads us to the monolithic aspect of populist leadership – a feature that has not received much attention. Populist parties seem to completely lack *"internal democracy"*, which according to some constitutions is *"a litmus test for democracy"* (p. 29). These parties are, as Max Weber construes, nothing but *"arenas for personality-driven micropolitics as opposed to a forum for reasoned debate"* (p. 29). As an example, Geert Wilder's party – Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) – *"is not just metaphorically a one-man-party. Wilders controls everything and everyone"* (p. 30).

Three Populist Techniques for Governing

"State colonization, mass clientelism, and discriminatory legalism" (p. 37) are the three techniques populists have been historically resorting to. Each of them might have been employed by non-populist leaders too, but populists practiced them with impunity.

State Colonization is a technique through which populists occupy the institutions of state in a manner that loyalists are placed in important bureaucratic positions. Viktor Orbán, transforming the *"civil service law"*, and Jarosław Kaczyński, ceasing *"the independence*

Scanned by CamScanner

of courts", are two of the recent examples of application of this technique in Hungary and Poland respectively.

Mass Clientelism is *"the exchange of material and immaterial favors by elites for mass political support"* (p. 36). While doing so, some of the populist leaders *"would go so far as Austrian arch-populist Jörg Haider, who would literally hand out hundred-euro bills to "his people" on the streets in Carinthia"* (p. 36).

The essence of the third technique, Discriminatory Legalism, can be perfectly captured by the phrase *"for my friends, everything; for my enemies, the law"* (p. 36). While the support base of populist leadership gets to enjoy the full protection of laws, others – who beg to differ – have to face the wrath of populists.

How to Counter Populism?

Given the way exclusionary politics, xenophobia and religious fanaticism are gaining popularity, it seems likely that populism will stay relevant. However, it can be countered by addressing the underlying issues that give it power. Muller says that the alternative is:

> An approach that seeks to bring in those currently excluded — what some sociologists sometimes call "the superfluous"— while also keeping the very wealthy and powerful from opting out of the system. This is really just another way of saying that some sort of new social contract is needed. (p. 70)

Such an approach embodies all those policy measures that go in line with the notion of pluralism. One of the examples can be

Scanned by CamScanner

that the countries where populism has a stronghold should reform their industrial and commercial policies by decreasing tax reductions given to the rich and powerful. These tax reductions are a huge blow to the working class underbelly. Muller states that ultimately it all comes down to acknowledging diversity of a country, forming separate majorities within a political setup and then bringing them together as a whole to give populists a run for their money.

Another solution Muller gives to deal with populists is that instead of completely negating their existence, the media and politicians should listen to what they have to say and should convey their message to the public. However, there is a catch: they should present populist messages to the public by changing the way the message is framed. To phrase it in a better way, Muller says, "*One can take their political claims seriously without taking them at face value*" (p. 84).

Reference: Muller, J. (2016). *What is Populism?* University Of Pennsylvania Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

4

How Asia Works: Success and Failure in the World's Most Dynamic Region

By Joe Studwell

About the Author

Joe Studwell is a renowned author, journalist and a public speaker. Most of his research pertains to East Asia and his areas of expertise include political economy, flaws with the mainstream economics and financial systems amongst others. He has written some of the most acclaimed books on Asia such as *The China Dream (2002)*, *Asian Godfathers (2007)* and *How Asia Works (2013)*.

Overview

The responsibility of economic development in a country rests with the government. Such a responsibility when met with effectively can turn out to be a successful intervention, leading to rapid economic transformation. *How Asia Works* provides a comprehensive analysis of the dichotomy that emerged in East Asia as a result of state intervention, with north-east Asian states creating

Scanned by CamScanner

economic miracles and south-east Asian states almost failing. In a nutshell, what lies at the heart of the success of north-east Asian economies is a recipe having three ingredients: land reforms to pave way towards small-plot farming; state-led manufacturing by imposing export discipline on manufacturers; and deploying a financial system that would support the first two ingredients.

Four Takeaways

Importance of Agriculture

Agriculture is a vital sector for any country wishing to ameliorate economically during its early stages of development, especially if most of its population is engaged in that sector. The key lies in successful intervention by the state because if "*market forces are left to themselves, agricultural yields tend to stagnate or even fall*" (Studwell, p. 21). The outcome of the emphasis laid upon agriculture can be measured from the success and failure of north-east Asian and south-east Asian states respectively. The former—including China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan—have succeeded owing to their "*good land policy, centered on egalitarian household farming*" (p. 24). These countries made a vivid shift to small-scale household farming, which eventually led to an evident increase in surplus, rural consumption, foreign trade and welfare payments. Studwell takes special interest in the agricultural miracle of Taiwan as depicted by the following excerpt.

> Taiwan is the most interesting agricultural story in north-east Asia, for two reasons. First, the island produced the most remarkable developmental results as a consequence of land reform. Second, with its

Scanned by CamScanner

> subtropical climate Taiwan is geographically more south-east Asian than north-east Asian and hence the success of land reform there gives us a powerful reminder that geography is not destiny in development. (p. 40)

Contrarily, the south-east Asian states—comprising Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand—have *"never followed through to fundamentally restructure their rural economies, [owing to] lack of domestic and international political conviction over the importance of household farming"* (p. 43). Farming, especially in Philippines, remains *"grotesquely inefficient"* (p. 52).

Coming back to north-east Asian economies, although there have been prominent examples of agricultural success, but perfection has not been reached yet. This is mainly because *"good policies that remain unchanged eventually turn into bad ones"* (p. 62).

The Manufacturing Phase of Development

The returns from agricultural development will *"begin to taper off after only a decade or so, and emerging economies have to transition into"* the manufacturing phase of development. Such a phase, according to the author, *"remains critical to the rapid economic transformation of poor countries"*, firstly, owing to the fact that it allows *"poor countries to mitigate... a shortfall of productive human skills"*, and secondly, because *"manufactures are much more freely traded in the world than services"* (p. 70). Thus, in order to *"direct entrepreneurial talent towards*

Scanned by CamScanner

manufacturing", the state must nurture firms through protection and subsidies, with a blend of export discipline.

As validated by the north-east Asian model, states can encourage exporters, cull those firms which fail and provide bureaucratic support in order to enhance the capacity to export. Unlike the south-east Asian states, the author maintains,

> What created the Canons, the Samsungs, the Acers and so on in Japan, Korea and Taiwan was the marriage of infant industry protection and market forces, involving (initially) subsidized exports and competition between manufacturers that vied for state support. (p. 130)

Importance of Finance Policy

Delineating the significance of finance policy, Studwell writes, "*It is the close alignment of finance with agricultural and industrial policy objectives that has facilitated the unprecedentedly rapid economic development of north-east Asia*" (p. 139). Conversely, a dissimilar situation was prevalent in the south-east Asian region, where "*high rates of investment were wasted on ineffectual land reforms, industrial policies that lacked competition and export discipline, and expenditures wholly irrelevant to economic development, such as luxury real estate and imported consumer goods*" (p. 141).

The takeaway is that successful states "*point financial institutions at the necessary agricultural and export-benchmarked infant industry policies*" (p. 174).

Scanned by CamScanner

The Story of China's Economic Success

China's success story has been of great interest to academics and policy makers alike. Before the late 1970s, China was not just economically alienated from the world (doing almost no trade with other countries) but also agriculturally inefficient (as a result of *"collectivisation of farming"* adopted in the 1950s). It was only in the era of Deng Xiaoping (1978-1989) that China transformed itself. Two things stood out under the leadership of Xiaoping: land reforms to encourage household farming and opening up to trade and foreign investment. Capitalist pundits in West took the transformation as a success of neoliberalism, but in reality it was not exactly like that. China adopted the Western economic model but in its own way, keeping the socialist legacies of financial regulation alive. Instead of following the *"imprecations of the World Bank, the IMF and the US government to deregulate its economy prematurely"* (p. 178), China worked with these organisations on its own terms. This unique amalgamation of Western and Eastern frameworks worked for China as revealed from its continued success since Xiaoping took over. In Studwell's words:

> Since 1978, China has posted an impressive developmental record, and has become the second east Asian state after Japan both to fascinate and unnerve western Europe and north America. The country has delivered a near 10 per cent average growth rate for three decades. (p. 178)

Scanned by CamScanner

Agriculture: the keystone of development. Of all the sectors, agriculture played the most pivotal role in China's economic development. But the lesson was learned the hard way.

> After starving to death 30 million mostly rural dwellers as a result of collectivisation…. the country managed in the early 1980s to increase its agricultural output by more than one-third simply by letting poor people garden. (p. 179)

Since then, the country did not look back and kept devising policies favouring development. As the author notes:

> Agriculture has been supported by north-east Asian-style agronomic advice and training in the villages, and by state-provided storage and marketing services. Private traders and moneylenders have not been able to corner the profits of farming in the manner of their south-east Asia counterparts, and thereby undermine farmers' incentives to produce more. Today, Chinese rice yields are in line with those of the north-east Asian states and are among the highest in the world. Wheat yields are similarly among the highest in the world, and more than 50 per cent ahead of what is achieved by scale farming in the United States. (p. 179-180)

Despite all the success China has achieved in the agricultural domain, it would be wrong to assume that Chinese farming policy supports the industrious farmers and their growth endeavours. Millions have been lifted out of poverty as a result of household farming but *"the Chinese political elite's age-old tendency to see peasants as eminently expendable has never*

Scanned by CamScanner

disappeared" (p. 180). Unlike the other north-east Asian countries, the Chinese government did not provide any subsidies to farmers and the local governments continued taxing peasants aggressively, much like the British colonialists in the Indian subcontinent. Consequently, the income gap between rural and urban dwellers kept widening. From the early 1990s to the mid 2000s, China's Gini coefficient (a statistical measure of economic inequality ranging from 0 to 1, where 0 represents perfect equality and 1 represents perfect inequality) rose from 0.3 to 0.45, indicating a significant increase in inequality.

The situation started getting better in 2006 when Hu Jintao banned imposing taxes on farmers, along with providing significant subsidy increases. The author calls Hu's era *"probably the best period for Chinese farmers since the 1980s"* (p. 181). Still the inequality equation has not changed much and the condition of Chinese farmers continues to be strikingly different from other north-east Asian farmers.

> None the less, the income gap between rural and urban residents remains at more than three times. Only the increase in inequality has been arrested. There remains a much higher political tolerance of inequality in China than was the case in Japan, Korea and Taiwan. More specifically, the critical thing that separates the Chinese farmer from his or her cousins in north-east Asian states is that the Chinese peasant does not own his or her land. (p. 181)

Scanned by CamScanner

The manufacturing puzzle. Just like agriculture, the manufacturing sector of China also offers interesting insights regarding economic development, with the difference that the complexities are more in number. The decade following the rule of Deng Xiaoping in 1978 saw China *"undergoing modest, incremental reforms rather than the privatisation shock therapy which was so damaging to post-communist Russia"* (p. 184). The process of development, however, halted in the early 1990s when both smaller and downstream state firms *"faced brutal competition from an emergent private sector and from foreign companies"* (p. 184). Zhu Rongji, the new economic leader, responded in 1993 by making local governments responsible for matters concerning the fate of smaller state units. *"The result was that local governments took a hard look at their costs and began to slash loss-making operations"* (p. 184). As for the big state firms, sheer competition was introduced after putting an end to their long-standing monopolies. *"Zhu's economic policy team created oligopolies of two, three or four entrants"*, giving rise to fierce state sector competition. The policy proved to be quite effective, with state sector oligopolies being far more beneficial than monopolies. There is a lesson for developing countries to learn from the success of this policy, as depicted by the following words of the author.

> In short, the government retained full control of the upstream and service businesses which in less successful developing countries fall into the hands of tycoons whose interests are not aligned with industrialization objectives. (p. 185)

Scanned by CamScanner

It remains to be seen if the government can maintain indefinite control over oligopolists (steadily gaining power); and there also remains the danger of state enterprises' failures as seen in some of the cases in Taiwan and Korea. Yet China seems to be doing rather well with its state-owned businesses. Studwell sums up the Chinese success story in these words:

> Out of the country's history of socialist industrial planning, and Zhu Rongji's 1990s rationalisation programme, there has developed a roster of substantial mid-stream businesses that are becoming increasingly globally competitive. These public firms are protected from undue market fragmentation by high capital barriers to entry, yet there are enough of them in each industrial segment to make for fierce competition. They indicate that export discipline, and domestic competition combined with the steady culling of losers, are more important than ownership in determining industrial developenent success. (p. 188-189)

The limits of the Chinese model. While China's manufacturing policy may deserve applaud, three caveats need to be considered. The first is that state enterprises might not easily transcend the contours of business-business activities, primarily because *"they lack the sensibility and flexibility to succeed in consumer markets"* (p. 193). The second limitation pertains to the kind of products Chinese firms sell in the international market. As they are not consumer products, they are either dependent on countries' procurement policies or their governments' approvals. This goes in favour of China when it comes to bagging deals in

Scanned by CamScanner

countries like *"Pakistan, Myanmar, Libya and Congo"* (p. 194). But when it is about selling to developed Western countries' governments or their state-linked enterprises, China appears to be struggling. Western countries can always reject these deals owing to security concerns or can simply deploy huge non-tariff barriers to obstruct China's growth. The third caveat is that while China is investing quite heavily to gain new technology, the results are yet to be observed. As the author notes, *"We do not yet know the extent to which China is still merely copying technology from elsewhere, as opposed to beginning to originate its own"* (p. 194).

Reference: Studwell, J. (2013). *How Asia works: Success and failure in the world's most dynamic region*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc.

Scanned by CamScanner

5

Kashmir: The Case for Freedom

By Tariq Ali, Hilal Bhatt, Angana P. Chatterji, Habbah Khatun, Pankaj Mishra and Arundhati Roy

About the Authors

This book has been compiled by various authors belonging to different fields of journalism, film-making, education and literature, having special interests in politics, world history, human rights and the South Asian region.

Tariq Ali is a world-renowned author and filmmaker. Ali has been very vocal about his thoughts on the current situation of Kashmir. He has authored several books, some of which include *Pirates of the Caribbean, Clash of Fundamentalisms* and *The Road to Terror*. He has been writing for the Guardian for decades and currently works as an editor of the New Left Review. Arundhati Roy is an award-winning author (The God of Small Things), an activist and a screenwriter. Habbah Khatun was a sixteenth-century poet; her presence in the title is merely honorary. Hilal Bhatt is a Kashmiri journalist. Angana P. Chatterji is a

Scanned by CamScanner

5

Kashmir: The Case for Freedom

By Tariq Ali, Hilal Bhatt, Angana P. Chatterji, Habbah Khatun, Pankaj Mishra and Arundhati Roy

About the Authors

This book has been compiled by various authors belonging to different fields of journalism, film-making, education and literature, having special interests in politics, world history, human rights and the South Asian region.

Tariq Ali is a world-renowned author and filmmaker. Ali has been very vocal about his thoughts on the current situation of Kashmir. He has authored several books, some of which include *Pirates of the Caribbean, Clash of Fundamentalisms* and *The Road to Terror*. He has been writing for the Guardian for decades and currently works as an editor of the New Left Review. Arundhati Roy is an award-winning author (The God of Small Things), an activist and a screenwriter. Habbah Khatun was a sixteenth-century poet; her presence in the title is merely honorary. Hilal Bhatt is a Kashmiri journalist. Angana P. Chatterji is a

Scanned by CamScanner

socio-cultural anthropologist, currently working as a professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies. Pankaj Mishra is an Indian writer whose work focuses on literature and politics.

Overview

Kashmir is a place of splendors that only *"paradise could transcend"*. Yet, it remains strangled in its struggle to have *"durable peace"* or, more specifically, *azadi*—independence. *"Kashmir now hosts the biggest, bloodiest and also most obscure military occupation in the world"*. The story of Kashmir is quite agonizing. Having inherited grief and sorrow, the Kashmiri youth today seems desperate *"to express their hatred of the state's impersonal brutality"*, either by throwing stones on the patrolling jeeps or by joining the ranks of militants fighting against the Indian army. Even more dismaying is the way the *"world deliberately ignore their plight"*. For intellectuals and journalists as well as *"Western pundits"*, it has always been a *"thorny question"*.

The book presents the Kashmir quandary in a historical manner, narrating incidents which violated human rights in every possible way. The United Nations Security Council resolution that required India to hold a fair plebiscite seems to be lost in the pages of history and the organization itself looks helpless at the moment. While the blame for the atrocities committed by the Indian army in the valley rests solely on India, Pakistan also played its part in weakening the case of freedom for Kashmiris by playing proxy-war games. Nonetheless, it is necessary to have faith in the voice of Kashmiris, hoping that it would draw the required attention of the world and also *"occasionally prick our conscience"*.

Scanned by CamScanner

Five Takeaways

The Story of Kashmir — *Tariq Ali*

Tariq Ali addresses the perpetual turmoil Kashmir has descended into over several decades. Whether there were Muslim dynasties or Hindus ruling in Kashmir, the plight of 'poor great unwashed' was always met with steady stoicism and sadistic indifference by all the rulers invariably. Kashmir has experienced exploitation, plunder, rapes, massacres and an unending unrest. The valley has witnessed many things; complete autonomy has never been one of them. Famous for being a virtual paradise, its beauty is perhaps the last thing on its people's minds. Oppressed by Indian armed forces, afraid of bearded jihadists from Pakistan, Kashmiris live in infinite distress.

The British decolonized India in 1947 with the creation of a new state—Pakistan—but Kashmir remained the *"unfinished business of Partition"* (Ali et al, p. 29). Pakistan was warned not to instigate a military invasion in order to occupy Kashmir. Meanwhile, Dogra Raja was coaxed into agreeing to join India. Carnage and chaos that surrounded partition was hardly put to rest when Pakistan decided to act impulsively and invaded Kashmir. Pashtun tribesmen under Khurshid Anwar were given responsibility to capture Srinagar, *"occupy airport and secure it against the Indians"* (p. 32). Once the Maharaja's army collapsed, tribesmen under Anwar started a series of looting, rape, plunder and killings of the local inhabitants. Driven by animal instincts, they forgot what

Scanned by CamScanner

they were there to do. They capitulated very soon and returned back. Since then, the conflict remains unresolved.

Sheikh Abdullah was a popular figure in Kashmir and a great friend of Nehru. With the help of Nehru, he became Prime Minister of Kashmir and brought some great reforms, *"the most important of which was the 'land to the tiller' legislation, which destroyed the power of the landlords, most of whom were Muslims"* (p. 35). But very soon, as Nehru succumbed to the demands of the Hindu chauvinists, a planned military coup occurred and Abdullah was arrested for having contacts with Pakistani intelligence. Nehru did not live up to his promise of giving Abdullah the space and power to reform Kashmir, Abdullah never got over this betrayal and Kashmiris never found a *Sher-e-Kashmir* again.

In a nutshell, the situation in Kashmir has been quite abysmal. Neither India nor Pakistan wants to see an independent, sovereign Kashmir. *"And yet independence is what the Kashmiri people appear to want"* (p. 54). In the decades' long tensions between the two countries, Kashmiris seemed to have borne the brunt. If Indian army manhandles Kashmiris, the Islamist radicals from Pakistan bomb them in the name of 'jihad'.

Considering the culturally and linguistically diverse regions of South Asia, Ali proposes: *"Economic and political logic dictates the formation of a South Asian Union, a voluntary confederation of republics"* (p. 55). And with that, Kashmir should be made sovereign—free of bloodshed and violence of immeasurable proportions. Kashmir's situation has reached an

Scanned by CamScanner

impasse and no one seems to win, but only Kashmiris seem to suffer great losses. Pakistan and India should embrace an independent Kashmir, because *"shared sovereignty is better than none at all"* (p. 55).

***Azadi*: The Only Thing Kashmiris Want** – *Arundhati Roy*

Arundhati Roy narrates the 2008 mass uprising in Kashmir—the year that marked the start of a new phase of freedom movement. Having deployed *"half a million heavily armed soldiers in the most densely militarized zone in the world"* (p. 57), the State of India has *"done everything it could to subvert, suppress, represent, misrepresent, discredit, interpret, intimidate, purchase, and simply snuff out the voice of the Kashmiri people"* (p. 58). But despite such a *"repression in which tens of thousands had been killed, thousands had been 'disappeared', and hundreds of thousands had been tortured, injured, raped and humiliated"* (p. 57), the people of Kashmir *"kept the fires burning"* (p. 58). This was evident in 2008 when the State of India's *"move over the transfer of a hundred acres of state forest-land to the Amarnath Shrine Board (which manages the annual Hindu pilgrimage to a cave deepin the Kashmir Himalayas)"* (p. 58) gave rise to widespread protests across the region. The enormous increase in the number of pilgrims over the years (20,000 in 1989 and 500,000 in 2008) was seen as a *"plan to build Israeli-style settlements and change the demographics of the valley"* (p. 59). The Kashmiris felt threatened and within days the protests *"spread from the cities to villages"* (p .59). *"Young stone-throwers took to the streets and faced armed*

Scanned by CamScanner

police, who fired straight at them, killing several" (p. 59). Equipped with *"a remarkable display of raw courage"* (p. 61), the unarmed protestors did not stop and soon the protests turned into a movement echoing the slogans of *azadi*. *"Not surprisingly, the voice that the Government of India tried so hard to silence in Kashmir massed into a deafening roar"* (p. 60).

Falling back to the same old claim, the State of India argued that *"it was all the doing of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), or that people were being coerced by militants"* (p. 61). Contrarily, it was the people who *"were in charge"*. *"There had been mass rallies in the past, but none in recent memory had been so sustained and widespread"* (p. 61). On 15 Aug, the protestors hoisted the Pakistani flag on *"Lal Chowk, the nerve centre of the city"* and *"wished each other 'Happy belated Independence Day'"* (p. 63). The following days saw even more protestors taking to streets and demanding *"three things: the end to Indian rule, the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force, and an investigation into two decades of war crimes committed with almost complete impunity by the Indian army and police"* (p. 63). On 18 Aug, an incredibly large crowd of people gathered in Srinagar waving Pakistani flags and raising slogans in favour of Pakistan. The Hurriyat leaders (Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq) addressed the rally and were highly applauded.

Having witnessed the situation closely, Roy argues that the movement needs *"doctrinal clarity"* and the Kashmiri leaders need to *"outline a vision for what kind of society they are fighting for"* (p. 69), as clearly there are two major factions within the

Scanned by CamScanner

movement—one wishing to accede to Pakistan and the other aspiring for an independent united Kashmir.

Roy concludes by saying that what goes in Kashmir does not stay in Kashmir; instead, the effects travel throughout India. The Hindu chauvinists, resultantly, *"victimize Muslims in India by holding them hostage to the freedom struggle being waged by Muslims in Kashmir"* (p. 71). It is for this reason that *"India needs azadi from Kashmir just as much—if not more—than Kashmir needs azadi from India"* (p. 71).

The Militarized Zone — *Angana P. Chatterji*

The Indian state's violence and abuse in Kashmir have left innumerable young men and women physically and psychologically tormented. While India remains stuck with the *"misleading idea that resistance movement is not locally inspired"* (p. 98), the Indian forces in Kashmir are busy torturing the Kashmiri youth. Gender-based violence, rape, murder, and unthinkable barbarianism have become a norm as a result of *"policy of incitement"* by the Indian state. The unyielding use of state violence has forced Kashmiris *"to resort to stone-throwing"* (p. 101).

India never adopted a policy that would seek to differentiate between terrorists and freedom fighters. Thus, the fate of resistance largely depends *"upon India's political decisions"* (p. 106), which have been fundamentally wrong for most part of the history. *"Impunity laws"* warranting Indian forces to commit massacres is one of the innumerable examples of faulty political decisions. *"Indian forces in Kashmir shoot and kill on unverified suspicion, and are immune from prosecution"*

Scanned by CamScanner

(p. 111). Moreover, in 2010, the Indian government orchestrated an *"inclusive dialogue"* with Kashmiris by inviting *"various stakeholders from Kashmiri civil society"* (p. 118) to the table. Ironically, there was nothing inclusive about the dialogue and as always the demands of the civil society were completely disregarded.

Not Crushed, Merely Ignored — *Tariq Ali*

It is appalling to see the amount of international attention given to violations in Kashmir. The author aptly observes, *"When it comes to reporting crimes committed by states considered friendly to the West, atrocity fatigue rapidly kicks in"* (p. 132). The world at large has forgotten the valley that is soaked in blood. *"Kashmir is never spoken of and it has never been allowed to speak"* (p. 135). A report on the region reveals a staggering statistic: from 1989 to 2010, there have been over 70,000 killings, innumerable forced disappearances and cases of torture.

Despite having faced countless atrocities, Kashmiris have not given up and still show remarkable degree of resistance in the form of protests and rallies. As the author notes,

> They fight, like the young Palestinians, with stones. Many have lost their fear of death; they will not surrender. Ignored by politicians at home, abandoned by Pakistan, they are developing the independence of spirit that comes with isolation, and it will not be easily quelled (p. 137).

Scanned by CamScanner

Seditious Nehru — *Arundhati Roy*

Jawaharlal Nehru has always been a proponent of a plebiscite or referendum in Kashmir. His stance was quite clear: the people of Kashmir should decide their fate themselves. In numerous speeches, interviews and official letters, he has been recorded declaring that the *"Question of accession in any disputed territory or state must be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people, and we adhere to this view"* (p. 125). On many other instances, he declared how important it was for the people of Kashmir to *"ultimately"* take the decision of accession or independence and that Kashmir was not a *"prize for India and Pakistan"* (p. 128). Finally, it was Pandit Nehru who acknowledged the United Nations as the *"Impartial tribunal"* and disregarded commitments which would disgrace *"international obligations"* (p. 127).

Reference: Roy, A., Mishra, P., Bhatt, H., Chatterji, A. P., & Ali, T. (2011). *Kashmir: The case for freedom*. Verso Books.

Scanned by CamScanner

6
This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate

By Naomi Klein

About the Author

Naomi Klein is an award-winning journalist and political activist. Having authored a number of bestsellers including *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate* (2014), *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007) and *No Logo* (2000), she is known for her analyses on capitalism and neoliberal globalization.

Overview

This Changes Everything is focused on the change in climate instigated by modern day capitalism. Klien claims that scientists are helping us understand our role in the larger ecological crisis. Years of *"technological innovation"* has ensured that an adverse shift in climate is inevitable under the current capitalist system. The prognosis, therefore, is clear: if no serious action is taken, both human beings and nature will have to undergo extreme suffering. In other words, the bottom line is that *"our economic system and our planetary system are now at war"*. What this essentially means is that *"what the climate needs to avoid collapse*

Scanned by CamScanner

is a contraction in humanity's use of resources" and *"what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion."* We ought to make a choice; either we can continue embracing the current economic model and be extinguished or we can choose to save the planet. We cannot pretend to be optimistic about the climate situation while following *"the rules of capitalism as they are currently constructed."*

Eight Takeaways

Understanding the Power of Climate Change

The power of climate change or the risks involved with it have been long ignored by the corporate establishment (throughout the world). This is primarily because those who directly benefit from capitalism *"are protecting powerful political and economic interests ..."* (Klein, p. 44). This *"defensive reasoning"* (and at times utter denial) also stems from the fact that the world at large finds it difficult to change their established "worldview". In other words, the threat posed by change in climate is either ignored by the transnational corporations or completely denied by the general public.

Abandoning Free Market Fundamentalism

The support for free market, over the years, has *"put the emphasis particularly on consumption and trade"* (p. 92). It has transformed the world into a huge web of consumers where being consumers is all people know. Hence, for most of the corporate world, caring for climate change requires much more than just *"accepting climate science"*. It means abandoning their identity and

Scanned by CamScanner

"allowing their American SUV to die right before their eyes" (p. 32).

However, as difficult as it may seem to change our lifestyle, it has become rather necessary. In order to succeed in controlling emissions even through carbon budgeting, *"we need to see less consumption (except among the poor), less trade (as we relocalize our economies), and less private investment in producing for excessive consumption"* (p. 92).

Overcoming the Ideological Flaw

Unlike popular belief, public ownership has a compelling relationship with *"the ability of communities to get off dirty energy"* (p.99). As witnessed in the Scandinavian world, countries with the most renewable energy resources (including Austria, Norway and Netherlands) *"have managed to keep large parts of their electricity sectors in public (and often local) hands"* (p. 99). Therefore, at least when it comes to energy, *"privatization reversals"* must take place so that public sector investments can be used to install smart grids, hydropower plants and windmills.

Building a Social Movement

After their economic crisis in 2001, workers in Argentina took over their factories and ran them as cooperatives with (relatively) low profit margins but huge added benefits. This *"decentralized ownership model"* helped them push against *"unsustainable wealth inequality"* (p. 123). A similar movement in the rest of the world constituting *"trade unions, immigrants, students, environmentalists, and everyone else whose*

Scanned by CamScanner

dreams were getting crushed by the crashing economic model" (p. 121) will help reinstate that climate action is *a "massive job creator, a community rebuilder, and a source of hope in moments when hope is a scarce commodity indeed"* (p. 124).

Extractivism

"Extractivism is a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth, one purely of taking" (p. 169). It is a concept borrowed from industrialization and early colonialism where the capitalist economies extracted natural resources, such as minerals, coal, gas, oil and so on from every corner of the world, leaving the sites *"poisoned, drained, or otherwise destroyed"* (p. 169) in the process.

The Disastrous Merger of Big Greens & Big Firms

Many ecological organizations in the US, known as the Big Green groups, have formed alliances with corporations actively involved in polluting the world. Thus, instead of *"using climate change as a tool to alter the American way of life, these organizations spend their days doing everything in their power to furiously protect that way of life"* (p. 210 In 2000s, for instance, the market-based solutions offered by these organizations were so *"frivolous"* that many people thought environmental problems were highly exaggerated. They stated that if the problem was really that grave, would they not be asking people *"to do more than switch brands of cleaning liquid, occasionally walk to work, and send money? Wouldn't they be trying to shut down the fossil fuel companies?"* (p. 213). Such a merger between Big Greens and big corporations is disastrous because it is utterly misleading.

Scanned by CamScanner

Resistance to Extractivism

As mentioned earlier, extreme high-risk extraction of minerals and fossil fuels leaves natural sites destroyed. One such example is that of Blockadia - an area in Greece manipulated and exploited by mining companies *"in their quest for high-priced commodities"* (p. 295). The good news, however, is that locals in different parts of the world are beginning to take a stand against this relentless capitalist invasion. In fact, their resistance to land exploitation has developed into a *"global, grassroots, and broad-based network"* over the past few years, *"stopping real climate crimes in progress"* (p. 295).

.The Journey from Extraction to Renewal

Klein reckons that the journey from extractivism to regeneration is difficult and painstaking, but extremely fruitful. It is essentially based on three key elements: democracy (people in direct control of their resources), divestment (in favor of environment) and resistance (a movement stewarded by *"a group of deeply rooted people with an intense love of their homeplace and a determination to protect it"*) (p. 344). But none of these can be achieved without a shift in worldview—*"a worldview based on regeneration and renewal rather than domination and depletion"* (p. 424).

Reference: Klein, N. (2014). *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate.*

Scanned by CamScanner

7

The Nordic Model of Social Democracy

By Nik Brandal, ØivindBratberg and Dag EinarThorsen

About the Authors

Nikolai Brandal is an academic, currently a PhD fellow at the Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History, University of Oslo, Norway. His areas of research include totalitarian movements, post-war Norwegian politics and Second World War. Øivind Bratberg is a Post-doctoral Researcher at the Department of Political Science, University of Oslo, Norway. His research interests range from British party politics to the analysis of political ideas and discourse. Dag Einar Thorsen is also an academic having received his doctorate in Political Science from the University of Oslo, Norway. He has done extensive research regarding political theory, ideology and the philosophy of science.

Overview

As the social and economic conditions evolved over time, the *"social democratic movement"* in Europe— particularly the Scandinavian countries— *"demonstrated a remarkable degree of determination"*. Being the basic idea of this book, such a development accounts for a critical analysis of a model operating in

Scanned by CamScanner

these particular '*Nordic countries*'. The 'Nordic model of social democracy' refers to "*...a shared set of societal characteristics, of which political economy and welfare state organization are only two*". The aim of the book is, thus, to analyze this model and to reflect upon the origins and development of social democratic movement and the subsequent challenges it faces. Furthermore, it also discusses sustainability of the model.

Nine Takeaways

Part I: Origins of the Nordic Model

The Birth of the Social Democratic Movement (1848–1916)

Discussing the origins of social democratic movement across the Scandinavian countries and in other places of Europe, the authors state that "*the socialist tradition grew out of a vast clash of political ideas*" (Brandal, Bratberg & Thorsen, p. 20) at the end of the eighteenth century. However, it was only after half a century that the movement emerged as a prominent one, specifically during the 1840s. Years later, the "*ideological and political outlooks*" of this movement gained ample clarity once an "*inevitable split...between the revolutionaries and social democrats*" (p. 19) developed during the First World War.

During the year 1848, Scandinavia was submerged in a political turmoil, resulting in development of the social democratic movement. In Norway, *The Thrane Movement* originated under Marcus Thrane; *The Chartist Movement* took hold in Britain almost a decade earlier; in Germany, *General German Workers' Association* propagated during the year 1863; and in Denmark, *International Workingmen Association* (IWA) leaped forth in 1871.

Scanned by CamScanner

IWA turned out to be so influential that its *"basic ideas and demands were quickly exported to Norway and Sweden during the decade that followed"* (p. 26). As the years passed, predominantly in the 1890s, *"trade unions and social democratic labour parties institutionalized and gained a political foothold across Scandinavia."* (p. 30). The transition was remarkably painful though.

Towards a Nordic Model (1916–1940)

Prior to 1914, state intervention—*"in order to regulate behavior and resolve collective tasks"*— was a concept rarely thought upon. The World War I set a chain of actions in motion and the concept changed drastically. The post-war years also saw the *"integration of the labour movement into national government"*, providing a framework for mixed economy and welfare-state to flourish, thus, paving the way for social democracy. The twist, however, came in the form of the Bolshevik Revolution which resulted in the creation of factions within socialist movement. According to the authors, *"In the spring of 1919... a crossroads between social democracy and communism was taking place"* (p. 37), with the *"main cleavage"* running between younger radicals in the Nordic countries.

Planning the Welfare State (1940–1970)

Scandinavian countries, much like during First World War, kept their neutrality during the Second World War. This non-alignment policy worked well for them until it became untenable. The Germans invading Denmark and Norway, in the subsequent years, is a glaring example of such unsustainability.

Scanned by CamScanner

In the post-war era, attempts at formulating policies that addressed social-security, emerging from the *"seeds of welfare state"* (p. 58), resulted in the *Atlantic Charter* in 1941 and, subsequently, the *Beveridge Report* in 1942. The latter, according to the authors, *"proved to be a basic reference point for the further development of the welfare state across Northern Europe"* (p. 59). An evident example of this was the *Blue Book*, developed in Norway. As the war came to an end, the experience itself paved way for *"cross-class collaboration across Europe"*, with social democracy evolving and encompassing characteristics such as: *"The Welfare state, redistributive taxation, state planning, and public ownership of industry"* (p. 63). This was also assisted by the formation of international organizations, formed as a result of *Bretton Woods* negotiations in 1944. Hence, as the author states, *"The post-war era represented radically increased ambitions for developing welfare services"* (p. 66).

Part II: Social Democracy and the Nordic Model

The Nordic Model in a Global Economy

Relating to the economic policy, the model is based upon: *"tripartite concertation between the state, employers, and trade unions; a comprehensive welfare state; and an activist industrial policy construed to sustain a skilled labour force and a favourable fiscal environment"* (p. 77). Furthermore, wage equality stands as one of the key features of this model, while the industrial policy is *"characterized by the relegation of sectional interests in favour of the collective concern for employment and growth"* (p. 79).

Scanned by CamScanner

The golden years of social democracy, initiated at the end of WWII, lasted for the next three decades till the onset of economic crisis of 1970s. Resultantly, the Keynesian measures got deflated, giving rise to neoliberalism. Over the years, the latter kept giving rise to periodic episodes of crisis, one of which— 'the 2008 financial crisis'—was severe enough to lead to a change in approach. The, Keynesians, thus, became relevant again after 2008.

The Welfare State: The Good Life or Dependency?

Equality, as a broad concept, reaches beyond the contours of wealth. The authors define an equal society *as "one where every individual can fulfill his or her potential regardless of inherited privilege and social class"*, the ultimate aim of which is *"personal fulfillment and individual liberty"* (p. 94).

As inequality in wealth *"leads to a parallel inequality in life opportunities"* (p. 95) and *"has aggravating consequences for all"* (p. 95), it is very important to find ways to overcome it. In social democrats' view, it is the redistribution of wealth that plays a cardinal role to that end. From their perspective, redistribution of wealth not only helps eradicating poverty, but also leads to availability of equal opportunities in a society.

Moving on to the concept of 'good life' in Nordic countries, the authors opine that although equality plays perhaps the most instrumental role in giving rise to it, a 'good life' cannot be solely attributed to equality. There are other ingredients to this recipe too and they include prevalence of a sense of community and a higher level of self-fulfillment among others. To this end, education remains pivotal.

Scanned by CamScanner

Another important characteristic of Nordic states is the high degree of importance attached to personal freedom. Individual liberty in a social democracy is sustained through state regulation. This approach can be defined as *"maternalist"*, meaning that *"rather than receiving formal penalties, the deviant will be subject to vocal disapproval"* (p. 99). At the same time, *"the social democratic position"* emphasises putting forth *"sustained efforts to ensure that liberty does not lead to dire social outcomes"* (p. 101). Nevertheless, a state's approach to liberty and freedom must evolve with time and all such considerations in terms of the conducive approach must be *"tried and tested continuously against a shifting social reality"* (p. 103).

In a nutshell, *"the quest to ensure equal opportunities must be a continuous one, where those who fail are given new chances"* (p. 108), and where good public services are provided without any predisposition. A society which provides equal employment opportunities with fulfilling jobs, and one which stimulates gender equality, must prevail. Endorsing the Nordic Model of social democracy, the authors state, *"Cultivating safe communities and enabling the good life are also legitimate parts of the Nordic Model"* (p. 108).

A Better and More Organized World

The social democratic movement has been supportive of international cooperation. The author describes its strategy in a concise manner: *"International in inspiration, national in implementation"* (p. 109). Resultantly, Scandinavian countries took

Scanned by CamScanner

full use of the idea of "*small states [having] a greater say*" (p. 110) and played significant role in terms of international cooperation. This is quite evident from their role in the management of international issues such as global arms race, nuclear weapons and climate change, with the effect that they have saved themselves from the "*naked rivalry between great powers, ultimately play[ing] a part in their fate*" (p. 110). The social democrats of the Nordic states believe that such cooperation would lead to a "*more equitable distribution of wealth and power in other countries*" (p. 114). They understand the validity of criticism on the United Nations but also realize that it is "*among the very few options available*" (p. 119). Likewise, the European Union must be judged "*on its contemporary merits, and not on its history*" (p. 121).

Part III: Is Nordic Model Sustainable?

Economic Growth and Environmental Protection

For social democrats, a sustainable policy means "*charting a political course that secures material and intellectual resources for future generations and where social democratic values can continue to flourish*" (p. 127). For such a policy to last, threats of "*existential character*" such as climate change needs to be addressed, and this is where the real challenge lies. Historically, the social democrats of the Nordic countries have remained "*at odds with environmentalists*" (p. 127). The growth model in the post-war era, which the social democrats pledged upon, resulted in environmental degradation. Another critique that social democrats face is in the form of the argument that "*politics is not an*

Scanned by CamScanner

effective mechanism for encountering a threat that is not readily apparent" (p. 128).

None the less, as the authors note, *"Social democrats have gradually developed an environmental consciousness"* (p. 128). In order to overcome the *"existential threat"* of climate change, it is necessary that leaders come to an agreement on a *"joint plan of action"* (p. 135). It is also equally important to address the issue regarding allocation of benefits and burdens, with countries bearing specific responsibilities. Being an *"ideology (which is) more concerned with political results than the means to achieve them"*, social democracy can offer *"added value when it comes to problem solving in this policy field"* (p. 137).

The Sustainability of the Welfare State

Another major challenge which welfare states face is of financial sustainability—*"a long-term balance sheet of state revenues and expenses"* (p. 114). It implies that *"Increasing financial commitments must be accompanied by similar economic growth, a challenge that is imminent across the Nordic region and beyond"* (p. 114). Demographic changes, increasing individual demand for specialized services, and international trade have created uncertainty for welfare states' future. In order to sustain the welfare model, Nordic economies need to undertake reforms in several policy areas. Specifically, they need to look at the *"ratio between the employed and the unemployed"* (p. 147). The need of the hour is to employ *"proactive policies for education and skills"* (p. 151).

From the purview of the Nordic Model, it does not seem difficult to undertake the above-mentioned reforms. If done in a

Scanned by CamScanner

timely and holistic manner, the reforms would bring about the desired social change. Thus, one major takeaway that emanates from the model is that state plays a vigorous role in the management of social change. However, it is equally important to pay attention to the fact that the "*dynamic between public and private will continue to be an important component of the process*" (p. 153). Commenting upon the manner the Nordic countries have managed this public-private-civic interaction, the authors state,

> When resources are collected by the state and channeled through civil society alongside the public sector, it draws on a legacy of popular movements and voluntary association ... a legacy that several political camps subscribe to. (p. 158)

Liberty, Empowerment, and Community

Analyzing the sustainability of a welfare state, the authors point out another critical key component of sustainability: the *moral sustainability*. Testing the "*viability of the model as a whole and the welfare state especially*" (p. 159), the inquiry relates to the high levels of social cohesion in the Scandinavian countries. The authors find that the "*policies that promote social cohesion*" (p. 159) need more attention. In the presence of ethnic and cultural diversity, such a policy success requires "*effective control [which] produces a high level of legitimacy for a welfare state*" (p. 161). At the same time, looking upon the shared risks and the "*extent of social cohesion experienced by the general population*" (p. 161) cannot be ignored.

It is important to note that the achievement of social cohesion and, thus, the viability of a welfare state also rests upon the idea of a specific community—one in which the views of minority are accommodated within majority population. Equally

Scanned by CamScanner

important is education, which has also assisted in high levels of social cohesion, especially from the viewpoint of social democrats. The degree of importance Nordic democracies attach to education can be measured from the fact that they have formed a system "*that ensures the youth of Scandinavia the opportunity to a university degree regardless of social background and ability to pay*" (p. 172).

Reference: Brandal, N., Bratberg, Ø.,&Thorsen, D. (2013). *The Nordic model of social democracy.* Springer.

Scanned by CamScanner

8

On Palestine

By Ilan Pappe and Noam Chomsky

About the Authors

Ilan Pappe is a leading historian and a professor of International Studies at University of Exeter, United Kingdom. Pappe believes that creation of Israel is largely responsible for perpetually staggering geo-political arena of Middle East. He maintains that Zionism is more dangerous as compared to Islamic militancy, which is regarded as an existential threat to the world by most experts. He is known as one of the "new historians" of Israel and most of his works borders on the Middle Eastern quagmire.

Noam Chomsky is an American linguist, cognitive scientist, a leading political activist and critic, currently working as Professor Emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Chomsky considers Israel's policies as morally repugnant. He has written extensively about Israel-Palestine conflict. Chomsky critiques Western elite's unabashed support for Zionism. He is regarded as one of the most intellectual men alive.

Scanned by CamScanner

Overview

Frank Barat brings Chomsky and Pappe together to underpin a coherent narrative on Israel's unjustified assault on Palestinians and its illegal expropriation of Palestinian land. The book is based on Chomsky and Pappe's interviews as well as some individually written essays. Among myriad of indispensable arguments, Chomsky's address to the UN General Assembly is of utmost importance. In his address, Chomsky concisely depicts Israel's brutal position in the region and how America fails to bring any pertinent solution to this perpetual problem. It is an interesting read, with Chomsky and Pappe taking different positions on the matter. Chomsky supports a two-state solution, so that Palestinian sufferings are put to rest for once and all. Pappe, on the other hand, embraces a one state solution, highly influenced by the downfall of the notorious apartheid model in South Africa. Both present very fascinating and intriguing lines of arguments with respect to their positions on how things should move forward. The book is a compelling update on Israel's dehumanization of Palestinians and occupation of their land.

Five Takeaways

'Settler Colonialism' and Language

Exploring the origin of the phenomenon of 'settler colonialism', Pappe describes that white settlers destroyed the local population in Australia, New Zealand and parts of America through genocides and permanently settled there. Following lines from the book sums it up.

Scanned by CamScanner

> Settler colonialism is a conceptual fine-tuning on the theories and histories of colonialism. In the Americas, in the southern tip of Africa, and in Australia and New Zealand white settlers destroyed the local population by various means, foremost among them genocide, to re-create themselves as the owners of the country and reinvent themselves as its native population (Pappe, p. 18).

Through a similar pattern, driven by Zionist ideology, Israel has been pursuing 'settler colonialism' in Palestine for decades. The concept, thus, alludes how Israel started a pogrom of the native Palestinians and insanely insisted that it was Israelis' divinely specified territory.

The origin of the language favouring 'settler colonialism' dates back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Early Zionists in 1880s used Hebrew words for the phenomenon, meaning *"to settle"* and *"to colonize"* in English. During that time, colonization had quite a positive connotation, but post-World War II period saw an altogether different meanings of the phenomenon. Since then, Zionists started looking for sophisticated connotations to justify their disproportionate assault on Palestinians. Jews settled in Palestine and Zionism was by and large all about colonization and expropriation of the Palestinian land.

The Apartheid State of Israel

The Israel/Palestine conflict is compared with South African apartheid, but there is one difference: it is far worse than the apartheid. Pappe believes that most of South African whites are still

Scanned by CamScanner

racist, but their *"regime of oppression collapsed"* due to the struggles of African National Congress (ANC) and international pressure. Therefore, even if attitude does not change, the outward expression, which often takes form of violence, can be constrained through law enforcement. Apartheid Week is observed in university campuses all over the world, with the comparison between the apartheid South Africa and Israel becoming more pronounced than ever.

> The Apartheid Weeks are the main focal point of annual activity for the cause in Palestine and they have won over the campuses that were previously dominated by Zionist lobbying and academia. (Pappe, p. 24)

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement

BDS movement calls for Israel to comply with international law and end its dehumanizing treatment of Palestinians. The movement was largely inspired by anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Pappe believes that this movement sends out a strong message to Israel, but people should be fully informed about the criminality of the country rather than the general level information which blasts everyone as a criminal. He also believes that the BDS movement only focusses on Israeli atrocities in West Bank and Gaza, leaving the West uninformed about the degree of oppression in other areas like Haifa, Naqab and Acre, where people are oppressed just as much. The movement is a strong one; it just needs to address multifaceted wrongdoings of Israel, which know no contours and affect all of the Palestinian land. As Pappe notes, *"BDS so far has been an impulse, not a strategy. I think it is an*

Scanned by CamScanner

impulse that needs to be accompanied by more thorough analysis, study, and explanation" (Pappe, p. 82-83).

Chomsky's UN Address on October 14, 2014

Chomsky raised scores of important points in his address to the General Assembly. He was highly critical of US' cold indifference to the plight of Palestinians and an unprecedented support for Zionist hegemony. He carefully analyzed significant historical events – ceasefires in particular – and how virtually every possible solution was turned down by Israel. In 1976, a resolution for two-state solution was brought forward by Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Israel decided not to attend the session; US vetoed the resolution. *"A US veto typically is a double veto: the veto, the resolution, is not implemented, and the event is vetoed from history"* (Chomsky, p. 161). Pattern of ceasefires has not changed over years either; Israel initially recognizes and observes the ceasefire and then disregards it by assaulting Gaza again. Hamas responds, and Israel gets an excuse to launch more attacks, with the magnitude of each attack being more lethal than before.

The '2005 disengagement agreement' was also misrepresented to the world, according to Chomsky. As per Israeli officials, thousands of Israeli settlers left Gaza to restore peace. But they actually left Gaza to remove all diplomatic options from the table and, more importantly, they left the city as a ramshackle territory, devastated by military assaults. In 2006, Hamas won the election. US – the democratic lodestar for the world – decided to plan a military coup. Hamas 'preempted' the military coup and took over Gaza. *"Now, that was a serious crime. It's bad enough to vote the wrong way in a free election, but to preempt a US-*

Scanned by CamScanner

planned military coup is far more serious" (Chomsky, p. 164). And as usual, Israel continued its onslaught of Palestinians.

Israel, with ideological, diplomatic and economic support from US, continues to expand its settlements in Palestine; and in the process, they dispossess and kill thousands of Palestinians. US' unabashed support and Israel's unprecedented oppression is not privy to the world. According to Chomsky, only two-state solution is viable.

South African Apartheid is a Misguided Analogy

According to Noam Chomsky, comparing Israel-Palestine conflict with South Africa is quite misleading. Because Blacks formed 85 percent of the South African population, they were a powerful workforce. So South Africa – willingly or unwillingly – had to sustain them. But in case of Palestine, things are quite different. Israel does not care if Palestinians live or die. *"They don't want to have anything to do with them. If they leave, that's fine. If they die, that's fine."* (Chomsky, p. 169). Expansion of territory and dreams of making a Great Israel is Israel's utmost ambition.

Chomsky points out the flaws in Palestine-Israel conflict analogy with the apartheid model and presents the contextual difference between two issues. With one state solution, Israel will continue to wipe Palestinians out and, therefore, there would not be any peace. He succinctly depicts how apartheid model is not applicable to the Israel-Palestine conflict. *"I would stress again that one crucial difference between Israel and South Africa is that Israel is separationist and South Africa was not"* (Chomsky, p. 99).

Reference: Pappe, I., & Chomsky N. *On Palestine*. Penguin (2015).

Scanned by CamScanner

9

Syria Burning: ISIS and the Death of the Arab Spring

By Charles Glass

About the Author

Charles Glass is a world renowned journalist who has spent most of his life bringing to light the plight of the Middle Eastern people. He has also been the correspondent for ABC News, The Observer and Newsweek. Some of his works include: Tribes with Flags, The Northern Front and Syria Burning.

Overview

Unlike most of the books about Syria that either favour one side or the other, Glass breaks the tradition of a straightforward account of a country torn apart and burned down by internal conflict, war and foreign intervention. Since Glass has spent most of his life in the Middle East and knows the area intimately, his book reads like a lament of sorts. The book takes no prisoners, as according to him, everyone is equally responsible for Syria's current situation. He starts off with a brief history of Syria leading

Scanned by CamScanner

up to the first spark of rebellion against Assad's regime in 2011. Glass, even though he knows what Assad's regime did, states that Syrians were much better off under him than they are now. He, then, takes us through an overview of a country that only wanted peace and democracy, but somehow ended up as a hub of sectarian warfare, the centre of global proxy war and extreme power dynamics. Additionally, according to Glass's calculations, the war has done Syria irreparable damage. Apart from ravaging the once great city of Aleppo and wrecking the art, culture, beauty and monuments, the war has cost nearly 300,000 lives and the displacement of about 11 million people. While this book may not read as coherently as Glass's other works, it is as unbiased of an account as one can get of Syria's war and conflict.

Four Takeaways

Foreign Powers Fanned the Flames

Glass has not held back and this book has nothing but scathing criticism of the foreign powers who meddled with Syria's affairs. Glass states that Syria's civil war has now become a monster and the situation was exacerbated by foreign influences. Initially, *"the armed men were a minority among the dissidents"*. Later, they gained *"ascendancy by the force of their actions and the international support"*, eventually ending up choosing *"rifle over the banner"* (p. 22). He further assigns blames to the USA, but primarily to Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

> Saudi Arabia and Qatar...poured in weapons and money. Turkey opened its border to arms, rebels and refugees. Clandestine training and logistical help came

Scanned by CamScanner

> from the US, Britain and France. Protests turned to civil war. (p. 26)

Global Proxy War

Syria has become the hub of proxy wars: *"the United States versus Russia; the Sunni theocracies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar against the Shiite theocrats of Iran; and Turkey versus Arab nationalists over the attempted restoration of Turkey's pre-World War I dominance"* (p. 34). It all started out peacefully with protestors asking for nothing but democracy. Soon, the uprising turned into a fulcrum of global power dynamics, with one foreign power trying to get a leg up on the other. In the author's words: *"The war has reached the stage at which many on both sides no longer regard the others as human, let alone as citizens of a country in which all must coexist" (p.35).*

Assad as a Security Blanket

Up until the beginning of the civil war, Syria's different religious and ethnic minorities coexisted peacefully. Though there were some tensions, but they found a way to work through it. *"During centuries of productive coexistence, there were only two outbreaks of sectarian conflict that resulted in massacres"* (p. 47). However, since the war began, this tense yet peaceful society crumbled and fell apart, revealing the worst of human nature. Considering the fact that Assad himself belongs to a minority group, all minorities lived in a world where they had security.

> The world of communities dwelling in Syria includes its Sunni Muslim Arab majority alongside a multitude of minorities: Sunni Kurds; Armenian and Arab Christians

Scanned by CamScanner

> of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant denominations; Assyrians; Circassians; Kurdish Yazidis, with their roots in the teachings of Zoroaster; and the quasi-Shiite Muslim sects of Druze, Ismailis and Alawites. (p. 46)

According to Glass, these minorities were always going to be the ones who would die first if a war broke out. This security blanket was one of the reasons most Syrians begrudgingly supported Assad's regime. They knew that the alternative would be absolute destruction.

Hypocrisy Reigns Supreme

Considering Syria's deteriorating situation, Glass says, "*To America's policymaking adolescents, the world is a plaything to abandon when it breaks*" (p. 78). He emphasises the hypocrisy of the United States by saying.

> The United States, with its European and Arab allies, had its own purposes in Syria. [...] The countries that crushed popular dissent against the royal family in Bahrain could not claim to believe in democracy for any Arab country. (p. 79)

It is because of these overt double-standards of the US and its allies that Glass completely dismisses the pretense of democratization. In other words, it was not the need to democratize Syria that made the US-Saudi nexus come into action but the dictates of power and international relations. From creating armed dissidents against the Assad regime to doing airstrikes on specified locations causing immense collateral damage, all US-Saudi moves were solely intended to counter Iranian and Russian influence. As summed up by the author:

Scanned by CamScanner

> The US opposed Assad, as did the Saudis and Qataris, because he would not relinquish the alliance with Iran that gave him a strategic asset against Israel. [...] The Arab monarchies, which had sought to dominate Syria since it achieved independence from France in 1946, saw in Iran an adversary for control of Syria and, through Hezbollah, Lebanon. To remove Assad was to eliminate Iranian influence in the Arab world. (p. 79)

Reference: Glass, C. (2016) *Syria Burning: Isis and the Death of the Arab Spring*. OR Books, New York and London. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

10

The Age of Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times

By Mohamed ElBaradei

About the Author

Mohamed ElBaradei is a diplomat and Egyptian law scholar. He served as the Director General of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) from 1997 to 2009. He and the Agency were jointly awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 for their efforts toward nuclear disarmament.

Overview

ElBaradei presents a detailed account of nuclear diplomacy, technicalities of nuclear programs, different dimensions of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and how countries diplomatically deal with nuclear aspects. He gives examples of Iraq, North Korea, Iran and Libya and highlights the complex nature and policy dynamics of nuclear programs launched in these countries. He also highlights the role of IAEA in curbing the menace of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Drawing attention towards the repercussions

Scanned by CamScanner

of nuclear programs, the author talks about the black market of nuclear arsenals and how things should go forward from here on. The book is a fascinating account of nuclear diplomacy and developing countries' ambitious desires to get hold of and expand nuclear arsenal.

Five Takeaways

Iraq's Nuclear Program, Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Other Technical Aspects

In the first chapter, ElBaradei explains the flaws in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The treaty calls for nuclear powers to help non-nuclear powers with this technology to be utilized in a positive manner. The author argues that the problem arises when the inspection regime finds it difficult to determine if there is a clandestine program going on in a country, because most of the steps involved in the positive use are the same as that for the negative use. Uranium and plutonium, after being extracted and preserved, go through same chemical reactions for both kinds of use, making it hard to unveil a secret program. Before Gulf War, very little was known about Iraq's nuclear program. US had only two nuclear sites on its list before the war started, *"whereas, in the postwar inspection, as many as eighteen nuclear sites would be identified by the IAEA"* (ElBaradei, p. 16).

The author then goes on to explain the capability of IAEA regarding unmasking secret programs, but also laments the manner how it is handicapped most of the times. Any skepticism regarding IAEA's ability and efficacy vanished after their Iraq tour. *"...IAEA's successful dismantling of Iraq's nuclear program*

Scanned by CamScanner

silenced many of its critics and detractors and was a testimony to agency's effectiveness" (p. 36). But, as ElBaradei clarifies, US' main goal in Iraq was not disarmament, but a regime change.

Missed Opportunities vis-à-vis North Korea

North Korea became part of NPT in 1985 but took seven years to *"complete its obligatory comprehensive safeguard agreement with the Agency enabling the IAEA to verify country's nuclear program"* (p. 38). IAEA found massive discrepancy between the declared amount of plutonium by North Korea and the actual amount. Forensic experts of Agency were able to determine *"that the reprocessing of fuel from the reactor to separate plutonium had taken place over a longer duration and with more complexity than the North Koreans were admitting"* (p. 39). North Korea was clearly stunned by Agency's effectiveness. After a series of events, request for a special inspection was made, but North Korea denied it. ElBaradei regrets the special inspection request as it hampered the Agency's ongoing inspection. US held a bilateral meeting with North Korea in Geneva and almost bought their nuclear program by promising to supply some reactors and energy resources. But it failed to live up to its promise and North Korea felt betrayed. It, therefore, appears that a comprehensive understanding of the situation and building a trust are factors more important than taking any impulsive and punitive measures.

Post 9/11 Security Landscape

ElBaradei elaborates the complex security dynamics post 9/11 attacks. Terrorists had surprised the world with their capacity

Scanned by CamScanner

to stage large-scale attacks. Agency's role, thus, was to deter these terrorists from gaining any sort of control over nuclear arsenals. Bush administration withdrew from Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and along with Putin signed a new Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, which was *"an agreement referred to jokingly in diplomatic circles as "sort of" treaty"* (p. 48). Bush was certain about Saddam's links with Al Qaeda and asserted that Iraq had not dismantled its nuclear programs. IAEA could not possibly know Iraq's status because of their absence from the region since Desert Fox bombing in 1998. After three long months, US and Uk provided the agency with fake documents with forged signatures. To save Washington and London from humiliation, ElBaradei told Security Council that the documents were *"not authentic"*. US was unhappy and blamed agency for the ineffectiveness.

Iran's Nuclear Program

Speculations surrounding Iran's nuclear program in mid 2002 gave ElBaradei and the agency another headache. They were already squandering their resources over Iraq and North Korea when the news came out. After a lot of efforts, Aghazadeh (then Vice President for Atomic Energy of Iran) allowed the agency to visit Iran's uranium enrichment plants in Natanz. Having done a detailed inspection, the agency was skeptical about Iran's assertion that the site was not yet used for any nuclear testing. The author gives statistical accounts of certain chemicals, number of centrifuges and their capacity. Skepticism grew further when ElBaradei met Iran's president Khatami and Ali Akbar Salehi who was an ambassador to IAEA. ElBaradei told US that sanctions and

Scanned by CamScanner

other punitive actions were only escalating the situation and that Iran deemed nuclear program as a nationalistic goal. US' hard-line policy of negotiations did not help. Iran's request to achieve some small element of their nuclear program was vehemently denied. After complex series of events, it appeared that the price was too high and forces against negotiations were too strong.

A.Q. Khan's 'Nuclear Bazaar'

In 2004, after seeing the trends in Iran and Libya, Agency discovered that nuclear landscape was taking another dimension—the expansion of black market in proportion to the magnitude of supply and demand. *"The development of an illicit nuclear procurement network headed by A.Q. Khan and his web of colleagues filled in the supply side of the equation"* (p. 166). Agency shortly found 1300 cases of *"illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials"* (p. 114). It is hard to say whether religious fervor or nationalistic spirit or greed motivated A.Q. Khan, because IAEA were not allowed to directly question Khan. By stealing copies from URENCO Netherlands, Khan had sizably expanded Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and by proliferating through black market, he had earned a profit of 400 million dollars, according to the book. So, we can assume that multiple factors drove Khan's ambitions: greed, religious spirit and jingoism. Agency discovered a lot of information which referred to Khan's involvement in nuclear programs of Iran, Libya and North Korea. A.Q. Khan's disappearance made sure that the mastermind of proliferation was handcuffed to do any more damage, but one

Scanned by CamScanner

cannot be sure of the extinction of black market seeing the kind of stakes and money involved.

Reference: Baradei, Mohamed El. *The Age of Deception*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014. Print.

Scanned by CamScanner

11

Dirty Secrets: How Tax Havens Destroy the Economy

By Richard Murphy

About the Author

Richard Murphy is a political economist from Britain, known for his works on tax evasion and tax avoidance. He is also an advisor of Trades Union Congress, the technical director of the Fair Tax Mark and a member of Tax Justice Network.

Overview

The book was primarily written in response to 2016's Panama Papers scandal – the biggest leak on offshore accounts and people involved with them – but its scope has proven to be much wider. Murphy's work not only redefines tax havens as *"secrecy jurisdictions"* to demonstrate their true impact but also identifies *"...the threat tax havens pose to our tax revenues, our markets, and therefore our economy and well-being – and ultimately to our democracies"*. Nevertheless, the tone of the book is more optimistic than pessimistic, as it proposes *"viable reforms that could shake tax havens to their foundations"*.

Scanned by CamScanner

Four Takeaways

Tax Havens: Meaning, Functions and Products

Tax havens and the term "offshore" (industry) are often used interchangeably. However, the truth is that both the terms have *"distinct"* meanings and interpretations. While offshore can be translated into *"elsewhere"* in the context of tax evasion/avoidance, this *"elsewhere"* does not consist of any physical geography. It simply means that the contractual parties do not belong to the same jurisdiction (or place) as the one in which transaction was recorded. On the other hand, *"tax havens are real places that we can identify"* (p. 31). In other words, tax havens can be described as real, physical places whose *"tax system provides an advantage to a person who is not resident in that place"* (p. 31).

The clarification between offshore and tax havens is necessary to lay the claim that tax havens often lead to a much broader range of problems than the offshore industry. Murphy believes that *"tax havens have three fundamental purposes"*:

1. They tend to undermine the laws in order to benefit the *"elite"* of our society.
2. They prevent legally elected governments from delivering what they promised in their mandate to their electorate or what *"their electorates might expect of them"* (p. 7).
3. They lead to an increase in *"concentration of both income and wealth around the world"* (p. 7).

All three of these functions produce problems that are so *"layered"* that the current policy tools designed by organizations

Scanned by CamScanner

like OECD have failed to tackle them. One of the reasons for this is that these layers are constantly strengthened via the set of products and services employed by tax havens. Products, such as trusts, foundations and companies, backed by *"politicians... lawyers, accountants, bankers and so-called wealth-management professionals"* transform into *"an integrated web that facilitates the offshore world where tax abuse takes place, as a result of the operations of the world's secrecy jurisdictions"* (p. 45).

Tax Havens or Secrecy Jurisdictions?

Speaking of *"secrecy jurisdictions"*, the term has been offered as an accurate alternative for tax havens. In Murphy's words:

> The real problem of tax havens is not tax abuse itself, important though that is, but the secrecy that permits that abuse and many others. It is this opacity that suggests tax havens might be better understood as secrecy jurisdictions. (p. 20)

The emphasis on secrecy rather than just tax abuse is justified because what tax havens today offer is *"something much more pernicious"*. They provide an asylum from *"a much broader range of regulation, permitting the user to escape their obligations not just to tax authorities but to other regulators, as well as to their competitors, creditors and shareholders, and (not least) their spouses and children"*. It is, thus, fundamentally wrong to limit the role of tax havens to tax evasion or tax avoidance and to assume that *"tax was the only reason someone might choose to record an activity in such a place"*. (p. 17)

Scanned by CamScanner

How Tax Havens Destroy the Economy

As mentioned earlier, tax havens (or secrecy jurisdictions) pose an enormous threat to global economy. Some of their key repercussions are mentioned below.

Developing nations' aid dependence. Tax abuse in the form of tax evasion by the elites has left *"too many developing countries dependent upon aid"* (p. 7). While developed nations have the liberty and resources to *"compensate for any losses to tax havens – and as a result suffer little absolute loss in terms of direct economic outcomes – this is not true for developing countries"* (p. 60). Low earning, combined with tax evasion, causes developing and third world nations to look for high-interest loans which they would never have to *"if they collected the tax that is rightfully theirs"* (p. 7).

Lack of transparency in markets. Most of the economies in the world today operate under the market system. In order to achieve optimal results under this system, economists believe, "perfect knowledge" is required. This means as much information as possible should be supplied to market participants *"so that decision-makers – whether they be businesses, investors, employees, regulators, governments or others – can make the best possible decisions on how resources are used"* (p. 8). Tax havens often hide this information about some of the key market players and disturb the market equilibrium.

Lack of fair competition and growth. Another important condition required for markets to succeed is equal opportunities for

Scanned by CamScanner

all. Equal opportunities include *"equal access to capital, so that those with good ideas can bring them to market"* (p. 8). However, once again, by intentionally creating *"opacity"* and concentrating the wealth into few hands, tax havens inhibit both fair competition and economic growth.

Cost to democracy. To elect any democratic government, it is important that the people voting have complete and thorough knowledge about the candidates standing. Needless to state, tax havens *"prevent this information being available to citizens"* and allow *"perpetrators to walk away from their actions"* (p. 26).

Tax competition. By definition, tax competition is a process used by various governments across the globe to attract capital and labor by offering lower tax rates and other similar incentives. In actual, however, this is a *"deliberate attempt by one state to deny to another state the resources that are its rightful property"* (p. 26) and is, thus, nothing short of a tax war. This tax war often results in misallocation of resources and incurs more loss than profit for all parties involved.

Policy Reforms to Tackle Tax Havens

Over the past 20 years, several governments and international organizations (OECD, EU and IMF) have come up with solutions to this problem. All of them, however, have failed in one way or the other. In most of these cases, it appears that the policies had *"failure built into them from the start"* (p. 65). Below are listed some of developments on these previous reforms alongside some new policy objectives, from the book, to tackle the same problem.

Scanned by CamScanner

Country-by-country reporting of world's major companies. One of the ways tax abuse can be minimized is by making the actions of multinational corporations transparent, as pointed out by OECD in the 90s. Given that most of the offshore accounts are handled by these corporations, it has become rather necessary to introduce legislations barring them from doing so. Under this policy reform, these companies *"will need to supply just seven pieces of data for each jurisdiction in which they trade including sales, profits earned before tax, tax paid in each country, scale of the company's operations, number of people employed, and total value of the investment."* (p. 66). This summarized data will highlight what each *"corporation's business consists of, and what it contributes to each country in which it operates"* (p. 69) and ultimately increase transparency.

Change in corporate tax. At present, shareholders are taxed in place of companies. This has led to severe tax evasion in the form of offshore accounts. A reform in the current corporate tax will not only resolve this tax abuse but also ease the process of tax collection. Two major benefits emanating from such a reform include efficiency and certainty. In the author's words:

> There are two other reasons for taxing companies. One is that it is efficient to do so: in many cases it is much easier to tax a company than all of its shareholders, even if you could locate them. This has the second advantage of ensuring that at least some tax is paid in the place where the company trades, rather than in the tax haven where its shares may be registered. (p. 73)

Scanned by CamScanner

Generating political will. It is almost impossible to achieve the reforms stated above if politicians or people in the government are unwilling. Hence, there is a great need to generate political will. One way of doing this is by making politicians realize that the only way they can *"re-connect effectively with their electorates... is by tackling tax havens"* (p. 8). Since incidents like Panama leaks have left people more aware, earning votes without enacting *"measures that will shatter the secrecy"* (p. 8) created by tax havens seems difficult.

Reference: Murphy, R. (2017). *Dirty Secrets: How Tax Havens Destroy the Economy.* Verso Books. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

12

Human Rights: Social Justice in the Age of the Market

By Koen De Feyter

About the Author

Koen De Feyter has worked and researched extensively on human rights issue. He has published two other books and many articles on the topic. He has also served in many governmental and non-governmental organizations. Currently, he is the Chair of International Law at the University of Antwerp, Belgium.

Overview

Feyter, through his appealing narrative, discusses the downsides of economic globalization in the context of human rights. In the age of the market, human rights and social justice are ignored with cold indifference by market forces. Powerful economies influence the decision making of relatively weaker states, and with globalization cost-benefit analysis takes precedence over human rights. Feyter argues that the existing human rights regime is far from being perfect. Powerful states are not held

Scanned by CamScanner

accountable for the crimes they commit, and they alone have the power to decide whether something is of universal importance or not. Contrarily, the marginalized states do not get to weigh in at all. Such a state of affairs is quite abominable. Unless certain actors are made responsible to ensure human rights across the globe without any discrimination, the situation is not likely to alter. These rights include not just economic, cultural and social ones but political and civil rights too.

Seven Takeaways

Essentials

Dimensions of globalization. By observing the example of financial crisis in Mexico and South East Asia in 1990s, we find that with globalization and free-trade, countries are vulnerable to unexpected shifts in financial flows. In the absence of international regulation, countries should be allowed to retain domestic capital controls, so that they are not affected by ever changing international financial policies. In liberal economy theory, there should also be free flow of labor. Feyter mentions an excerpt from Nayyar's study and writes: *"The case for unrestricted labor mobility is as compelling as the case for unrestricted capital mobility or the case for free trade"* (Feyter, p. 9). Labor should work wherever they are more productive. But by invoking security concerns, states do not allow such a free cross-border movement.

States and market forces. When states provide space for the play of market forces, they inadvertently allow these firms to influence their national policies, the implications of which might not necessarily be favourable for the local population. Thus, the

Scanned by CamScanner

influence might be inevitably intertwined with certain compromises to be made by the state. Because such compromises can be enormously harmful to the marginalized factions of society, the state should not allow unfettered play of market forces.

Moreover, there is increasing gender inequality with globalization on the rise. The situation is quite pessimistic in the developed world, let alone be the developing one. *"Liberalization processes in the EU's new member-states do not appear to have a positive impact on gender pay gaps"* (p. 14).

The bottom-line is that though states might benefit in the short-run by providing space for corporations to lead the economy, but such an approach, which is essentially based on cost-benefit analysis, is likely to result in lack of social justice and a deteriorated human rights situation.

States and international organizations. International organizations lay down rules to sustain globalization in a way that state's (especially those which are highly indebted and have little bargaining power) action is controlled and limited. *"National policy-making increasingly comes under the activities of these organizations"* (p. 15).

States and other states. Global economy is merely a mirror-image of the interests of economically powerful states. Developing countries have no power to preserve national interests in context of globalization. International economic organizations' decision making borders on the rules laid down by industrial giants. *"In both the IMF and the World Bank, the developed countries*

Scanned by CamScanner

and among them particularly the United States, dictate policy. (p. 19)

Relevance of Human Rights

With economic globalization, come numerous compromises on human rights. The post World War II period brought a package of human rights along with 'free market economy' and liberal democracy, and it persists to the present day. With that design, states do not take a universal view of human rights; instead their humanitarian considerations are largely driven by national interests. Feyter argues that adverse effects of economic globalization should be taken as a starting point while discussing human rights, *"regardless of the interests of one state, or of groups of states, such as the developing or the developed countries"* (p. 20). Much of the focus is laid on economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights, with civil and political rights getting little attention. In order to overcome the lacunae the human rights regime is marred with, following are some viable recommendations proposed by the author.

- States need to adjust their obligations. They needs to be realize that even if they *"withdraw from the economy, their human rights obligations remain. For example, even if a state no longer directly provides an essential service such as the provision of healthcare, it remains responsible for the realization of the right to health"* (p. 22).
- Policy makers should not make any choices that violate human rights. Sometimes, while signing legal documents, as states commit themselves to the rules laid down by World Trade Organization, they do not keep in mind the

Scanned by CamScanner

scope of human rights. These rights should be prioritized over all other legal obligations. *"Only under these circumstances is the human rights regime useful as a corrective to the failures of governments and markets"* (p. 23).

- The international human rights regime should establish a much effective accountability mechanism, so that violators go through stringent scrutiny. It should also offer reparations to those adversely affected. Such a mechanism should also be easily accessible to the marginalized individuals, who at the moment face a range of barriers including the linguistic and geographical ones.
- Along with protecting people who face worst abuse, human rights regime should also consider woes of people who need minimum level of protection. More focus should be laid on the abuse and marginalization faced by women.
- There should be social mobilization. A space should be given to the victims where they can raise their voice against the oppressors. Such freedom of expression also allows psychological empowerment and boosts self-esteem of individuals.
- Unhindered cross-border movement should also be prioritized. Migrants and refugees should not be considered as an unwelcome invasion. They should be given maximum liberty and equal rights.

Join Us For EBooks & Notes
Telegram Group t.me/CssAspirantsForum
Facebook Group Name CSS Examination Ebooks & Notes
Whatsapp # +92-310-5454503

Scanned by CamScanner

Obstacles

Lack of compliance. UN Commission on Human Rights, with a primary function of investigating all kinds of human rights abuses, fails to legally bind states for any kind of violation. There are neither any sanctions nor any reparations for the abused. Thus, on an international level, situation is quite abysmal, to say the least.

In a regional context, human rights system in America and Europe works rather well. But in other regions, things look quite bleak. The situation is perhaps the worst in Africa. "*The African human rights system suffers from a perennial lack of resources*" (p. 35). Asia and Middle East present equally dismal scenario, as both regions lag way behind as far as any development on human rights regime is concerned.

In domestic context, states tend to mold international treaties in a way that no conflict with domestic laws takes place. Through this self-serving incorporation of international laws into domestic laws, states are successful in barring any international binding.

Tied by treaty. International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural rights, through their articles, present the legal implications of treaties for the states they ratified with. According to critics, treaties call for general implications without being specific, making lack of compliance inevitable. Moreover, the articles are worded in a complex way, evoking various interpretations.

Limited by law. Human rights protection should not be associated to legal parameters only. Most people in the world

Scanned by CamScanner

cannot afford lawyers. Moreover, *"in countries with high illiteracy rates, the requirement of a written complaint denies access to those most vulnerable to human rights violations"* (p. 60).

Post 9/11

While the September 11 attacks were undeniably horrible and a clear violation of human rights, the response to them has been equally transgressing. Multiple instances, as reported by Amnesty International, suggest that war on terrorism was disproportionate in its magnitude. US' intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, paranoid scrutiny of migrants and inhuman behavior with detainees are some of the examples. In the name of combating terrorism, the counter-terrorism regime did not hesitate from violating inalienable human rights. As reflected in a number of cases, US did not follow the free-trial criteria prescribed by international law while investigating many individuals. Furthermore, people seeking refuge from oppressive powers at home were not welcomed either. Such a draconian approach went unchallenged on international level, mainly because of US' global dominance.

In the wake of 9/11, investigation turned into a business. Perpetrating the limits of human rights violations, US outsourced the job of interrogation to private corporations, thus, creating a new industry of engagement and revenue generation for the private firms. As stated by the author, *"Credible evidence surfaced that the abusive treatment was not random but orchestrated. Private security firms were involved in the conduct of interrogations"* (p. 69). Moreover, US' unprecedented financial and

Scanned by CamScanner

ammunition support to the countries having a terrible record vis-à-vis human rights considerations is quite disturbing.

Postponing Global Social Justice?

A year before the attacks of September 11, UN laid down Millennium Development Goals *"to achieve coherence among the development policies of both donor and recipient countries"* (p. 83). The goals were to halve the amount of people suffering from severe hunger till 2015 in comparison with 1990, to improve child mortality, to provide universal primary education and to diminish the gender disparity in education. But after 9/11, the developed countries, by using Development Assistance Committee (DAC), redirected human rights fund to combat terrorism. In response, DAC produced papers to address the issue and stated that development fund should not be used for non-developmental purposes. *"There is a risk that traditional security-related programmes are simply relabelled as development aid, and then claimed from that budget"* (p. 87). Thus, in the name of countering terrorism, human rights and social justice are exceedingly compromised.

Does Geneva Matter?

Outspoken Social Rapporteurs have often raised concerns about lack of support from High-Commission. There are often complaints about references gone missing, delayed translations and a general lack of enthusiasm from the staff. Geneva Human Rights system is responsible for translating local issues into a global language, but because of its intergovernmental nature and consideration of consensus of states about what is worthy of acceptance and what is not, *"grassroots human rights experiences*

Scanned by CamScanner

as reflected in the practice of social movements, are lost in translation" (p. 126). The Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil is a perfect example to define this complex problem. The movement arose in 1984 as a reaction to Brazil government's decision to adopt a market-assisted land reform program facilitated by World Bank. Through this land reform program, instead of giving land to the landless, government started selling it to farmers. Such a step was unconstitutional and government was merely serving corporate agenda. As Feyter notes, *"Government funds were shifted from the governmental agency responsible for expropriations to a newly established Land Bank"* (p. 127). To tackle MST, landowners targeted the activists with the help of police, especially in rural areas. There were large-scale human rights abuses, killings and unprecedented violence. Convicts were rarely prosecuted or arrested. Asma Jahangir from Pakistan, as a Special Rapporteur to UN for The Commission on Human rights, visited the areas and reported the large-scale killings and violence *"committed with impunity"*. Seeing the increasing poverty and hunger in Brazil as a result of the market-model, UN sent another Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Jean Ziegler from Switzerland. He approved of the activities by MST in occupied lands and called for immediate agrarian reforms to improve the situation. But none of his recommendations was taken up seriously and nothing was done regarding the abuses faced by members of one of the largest socialist movements in the world. Geneva paid very little heed to the whole matter. Its response was not helpful for the victimized MST activists whatsoever.

Scanned by CamScanner

Avenues of Hope

When human rights regime fails to deliver, activists seek to find alternative options. International and regional tribunals of various ilks may be one such alternative. Below is a short account of the accomplishments of these substitutes.

- People's tribunal was successful in addressing the grave concerns of MST before the jury in Brazil, despite being called illegal and politically oriented. The tribunal did not renounce raising voice for MST activists, calling for agrarian reforms and persecution of perpetrators.
- Similar international tribunals have been successful in tackling multiple human rights abuses in Columbia, Canada, Germany and Japan.
- *"In the United States and in India, trade unions regularly organize tribunals on workers' rights and corporate accountability"* (p. 140).
- Social and Economic Rights Action Centre in Nigeria, a non-governmental and non-partisan organization, aims to secure social and economic rights of people in Nigeria. They also endeavor to build strategies that effectively tackle any such issue faced by ordinary citizens. Moreover, they create awareness among people about their social and economic rights.

Reference: Feyter, Koen De. *Human rights: Social justice in the age of the market*. London/New York, Zed Books, 2005.

Scanned by CamScanner

13

Capitalism: A Ghost Story

By Arundhati Roy

About the Author

Arundhati Roy has produced a number of fiction and nonfiction books over the span of 20 years. Apart from being the winner of Man Booker Prize, she is a renowned political activist actively involved in the humanitarian and environmental causes.

Overview

Capitalism: A Ghost Story is one of the first pieces of work by the author that established her position as a political essayist. Comprising of two sections and seven chapters, it attempts to uncover the true workings of capitalism: questions the power of Indian and Western elites, highlights the adverse impact it has had on the poor, points out the facade it has created in the name of liberal progress and delineates how the story of capitalism is nothing but a 'ghost story'.

Scanned by CamScanner

Five Takeaways

'Ghosts' of the Ghost Story

The book starts with a description of Antilla—a 27 story building, house to the richest man in India, Mukesh Ambani. As Roy explains the features of the house, she reveals the stories of millions of Indians that live below the poverty line, including the slum-dwellers, *Adivasis*, Maoists in the jungles of Central India, Muslims, Nagas and more. She states that in the modern capitalist society of India, "*hundred richest Indians ...the Tatas, Jindals, Vedanta, Mittals, Infosys, Essar, and the Reliance Group... own assets equivalent to one-fourth of country's total GDP*" (Roy, p. 7), while 60% of the total population earns less than 20 rupees a day. Appallingly, this vast difference is conveniently disguised under the so-called growth of Indian middle class.

The author goes on to explain this by stating that there are various displays of neoliberal culture throughout the year in her country. Such corporate events do more harm than good to the overall economy as they often result in laws being passed where poor are dispossessed of their houses/property like "*laundry stains*". For instance, during the Commonwealth Games, "*Street vendors disappeared, rickshaw pullers lost their licenses... Beggars were rounded up, tried by mobile magistrates in mobile courts, and dropped outside the city limits*" (p. 2) in an attempt to "*beautify*" India for incoming foreigners.

Such instances, in Roy's opinion, have been so common that now half of the Indian population lives "*side-by-side with spirits of the netherworld, the poltergeists of dead rivers, bald*

Scanned by CamScanner

mountains, and denuded forests; the ghosts of 250,000 debt-ridden farmers who have killed themselves, and over the 800 million who have been impoverished and dispossessed to make way for us" (p. 7).

Gush Up vs. Trickledown

Extreme income inequality and concentration of wealth also leads to concentration of institutional or political power, which in turn causes even greater concentration of wealth/power. This is what she referred to as the *"Gush-Up"* effect. According to this effect, *"the more you have, the more you can have"* (p. 8). Speaking of this effect, Roy made a strong case against the common concept called *"the Trickle-down"* effect whereby the benefits or profits of the wealthy trickle down to everyone else in a society. She argues, *"Clearly, Trickle-down hadn't worked"* in India or any other capitalist state.

Instead, for years and decades, the richest have found ways to become a part of policy/decision making so that they can exploit poor for their own materialistic gains. As *"Gush-Up"* effect enables wealth concentrate into the hands of the billionaires, *"tidal waves of money crash through the institutions of democracy – the courts, parliament – as well as the media, seriously compromising their ability to function in the ways they are meant to"* (p. 11). In other words, governments in modern capitalist societies are nothing but partially functioning entities controlled by large corporations through money and other forms of bribery.

Corporate Philanthropy: a Misnomer

Roy notes that in India, lands of millions of people are handed over to MNCs (multinational corporations) or other private

Scanned by CamScanner

corporations in the name of *"public interest"*. All these SEZs (Special Economic Zones), chemical hubs, dams, barrages and highways are constructed bulldozing countless colonies and no one raises a voice. Unfortunately, in her words, *"the sanctity of private property never applies to the poor"* (p. 10).

The aforementioned corporate control is not restricted to governments, Roy states. Local NGOs and activist groups are also backed by big organizations in most cases. These NGOs and political movements take huge sums of money to stay quiet on the capitalist atrocities stated above. An example is given of Anna Hazare and his highly acclaimed anti-corruption movement. While the movement spoke at length about *"good governance"* and human rights, Roy states that it completely neglected the after-effects of capital accumulation. In fact, the Lokpal Bill advocated by Hazare paves way for *"more privatization"*, the writer argues.

Another "philanthropic" effort by large corporations (apart from funding NGOs) is made in the form of scholarships and funding to students and educational institutions respectively. The writer states that this tendency to use arts and literature to serve personal interests has been copied from the West.

> By the 1950s the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, funding several NGOs and international educational institutions, began to work as quasi-extensions of the US government, which was at the time toppling democratically elected governments in Latin America, Iran, and Indonesia. (p. 22)

The Old and the New Cold War

The author, in her analysis of modern capitalism, also draws comparisons between the old (US vs. USSR) and the new

Scanned by CamScanner

(U.S. vs. China) Cold War. She uncovers the cunning tactics used by huge private organizations to prevent the socialist takeover in South Africa and other USSR-occupied countries, because it meant that the former would not have access to natural resources required to run these organizations. As the influence of the Soviet Union began to increase on the African National Congress (ANC) and endangered "*...US strategic and corporate interests (that is, access to South Africa's minerals)*", the Rockfeller Foundation "*began to support the ANC*" and soon "*...socialism disappeared from the ANC's agenda*" (p. 28).

Roy states that the same organizations are now using strategic analysts in India to "*play up hostilities between India and China*" (p. 33), so that India plays the same role in the 'new cold war' against China that Pakistan played as a U.S. ally in the 'old cold war' against USSR. However, India should learn from Pakistan's mistakes and avoid any such alliance.

Kashmir: No Longer the Political Football

Apart from capital accumulation, Roy states that another subject that has been vehemently neglected by Indian authors is that of Kashmir. Regrettably, those who speak of or write about the issue have to face the wrath of the Indian authorities. Roy cites the example of a US radio-journalist, David Barsamian, who was deported in 2011 because "*he had reported on events in Jammu and Kashmir during his last visit to India*" (p. 38) and was highly critical of the Indian state's policy in the region. Quite similar are the stories of numerous Indian journalists, writers and filmmakers who committed the simple crime of telling the truth. "*Kashmir is in*

Scanned by CamScanner

the process of being isolated, cut off from the outside world, by two concentric rings of border patrols—in Delhi as well as Srinagar" (p. 38).

Criticizing the Indian state further, Roy asserts that the military occupation should not be confused with Indian victory at all, as "*ordinary people armed with nothing but their fury have risen up against the Indian security forces*" (p. 44). Kashmiris have seen "*the full majesty of Indian democracy at work*" (p. 51) and no other faction of people in India knows more of this illusion than Kashmiris. They have been a witness to Kashmir's unjust usage by Indian politicos for decades to redirect frustration of Indian middle-class from the growing inequality to the good old "*battle between an inclusive secular democracy and radical Islamists*" (p. 53). This old political football, however, will not be controlled easily now and an effective change in policies is required to avoid any serious trouble in the future.

Reference: Roy, A. (2014). *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*. Haymarket Books. Chicago, Illionis. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

14

Pakistan: A Hard Country

By Anatol Lieven

About the Author

Anatol Lieven is an author, researcher, policy maker and an award winning journalist. His articles have been published in several prestigious publications such as the Guardian, The Nation and The Financial Times. He has written several books, some of which include *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power*, *America Right or Wrong* and *Pakistan: A Hard Country*. Currently, he is the Chair of International Relations and Terrorism Studies at King's College, London.

Overview

Pakistan is, and has been for a long time, portrayed in the Western media as a militant country where terror reigns supreme. While only a fraction of that portrayal might be true, Lieven's book sheds light on the factors that make Pakistan seem that way. Primarily focusing on the rise of Taliban, Lieven addresses the issues of feudalism, religion, the military and Pakistan's oncoming

Scanned by CamScanner

ecological crisis. He ultimately comes to the conclusion that while Pakistan may seem like a nearly failed state, it is not so. Rather it may be a paradox—its dysfunctions keep it cohesive but not-so-smoothly running. Lieven also states that given the current state of Pakistan (Lieven's book came out a month before USA's raid on Osama Bin Laden's compound in Abottabad), it would be unwise of the USA to keep interfering within the state as it may directly challenge the state's sovereignty and spark a crisis that Pakistan may never be able to recover from.

Five Takeaways

Pakistan is not a Failed State

While Lieven's book is a thorough and objective rendering of Pakistan's failed political system, perpetually staggering economy, patriarchal institutions that make life for women increasingly difficult and much more, it also has a note of hope in there.

> Pakistan is divided, disorganized, economically backward, corrupt, violent, unjust, often savagely oppressive towards the poor and women, and home to extremely dangerous forms of extremism and terrorism – 'and yet it moves', and is in many ways surprisingly tough and resilient as a state and a society. It is also not quite as unequal as it looks from outside. [...] The National Finance Commission Award of 2010, [...] demonstrated that Pakistani democracy, the Pakistani political process and Pakistani federalism retain a measure of vitality, flexibility and the ability to compromise. None of these things is characteristic of

Scanned by CamScanner

truly failed or failing states like Somalia, Afghanistan or the Congo." (Lieven, p. 20)

Lieven, thus, asserts that despite all its shortcomings, Pakistan is not a failed state but a struggling one. It will continue to exist unless there is outside intervention by the USA, India, or both.

Army as the Saviour

Given Pakistan's history with riots, coups, internal conflicts, the Taliban and the overall failure of democracy, it is safe to say that the army is the only functional institution left in Pakistan. So much so that *"Civilian governments themselves have often asked the military to step into aspects of government, because of its greater efficiency and honesty"* (p. 172). This may be attributed to the fact that whenever politicians make a mess or whenever there is a crisis in the country (the case of *Laal Masjid* being an example), the army swoops in and saves the day. Another example is that of notorious 2009 floods, which ravaged certain areas of Pakistan. Army was again put in charge for *"relief and reconstruction in Swat and elsewhere"* (p. 173). Additionally, Lieven states that the Pakistani army is not driven by outsider forces such as the *"allies"* to keep the state running, but rather to put it bluntly, by its antipathy and hatred towards India.

ISI, Military, India and Kashmir

The author suggests that Pakistani military has only one tragic flaw: its obsession with Kashmir's liberation from Indian armed forces. The obsession is of course shared with Pakistani politicians as well as general public, which see Jihad in Kashmir as entirely legitimate. Pakistan army's blood feud with India has been

Scanned by CamScanner

there from the beginning. They are willing to do anything to fight Indian armed forces, however futile that fight may be; as long as it is against India, it makes sense to Pakistan. One example of that can be Siachin war, which the author describes as: *"possibly the most strategically pointless fight in the entire history of human conflict"* (p. 192).

Commenting on the Soviet-Afghan war and the role ISI played, Lieven argues that when Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan, ISI deemed it as its victory. Huge amount of money from U.S and Saudi Arabia allowed ISI to build a strong base. After Soviet withdrawal, ISI thought they could liberate Kashmir through same modus operandi, ignoring the geo-strategic differences. This was only going to end in a disaster. Despite ISI's efforts, as they claim, the Jihadi groups prepared by the agency did not follow the instructions and started attacking India outside Kashmir as well. Moreover, this operation was not meant to liberate Kashmir but annex it with Pakistan. *"The ISI's Kashmir strategy reflected the longstanding Pakistani strategy of promoting Kashmiri accession to Pakistan, and not Kashmiri independence"* (p. 195).

Pakistan is not Going to be Taken Over by Islamist Insurgents

Lieven argues that *"support for Islamist rebellion against the Pakistani state is so far present only in the Pathan areas, and in only some of them – in other words, less than 5 per cent of the population"* (p. 20). Therefore, to call it a mass support would be a hideous generalization and, perhaps, an oversimplified view of the situation. Far from supporting any Islamic uprising against the state, Pakistanis do not even support the "gradualist" Islamic political

Scanned by CamScanner

parties in large numbers. The *"only truly national Islamist party"*—JamaatIslami—manages to win only 5 per cent of the electorate.

While there is no complete denial regarding the existence of extreme Islamist ideology in Pakistan, it is the Sufi ideology that is dominant in the region. The Sufi tenet apart from spreading the message of peacealso symbolically resists Taliban's mayhem. *"[...] the cults of the saints, and the Sufi orders and Barelvi theology which underpin them, are an immense obstacle to the spread of Taliban and sectarian extremism, and of Islamist politics in general"* (p. 149).

A central point of Lieven's book is that Pakistan is not a country on the brink of destruction; it is not going to be taken over by Islamic insurgents any time soon unless instigated by the USA. He strengthens his anti-interference argument by saying,

> Nonetheless, tough they are; and unless the USA, India, or both together invade Pakistan and thereby precipitate its disintegration, the likelihood is that the country will hold together, and that if it eventually collapses, it will be not Islamist extremism but climate change – an especially grim threat in the whole of South Asia – that finishes it off. (p. 20)

Lieven further explains the security situation of Pakistani nuclear arsenals and states that even though Islamic extremism is present in the underbelly, sporting rifles are not going to take over Pakistan's nuclear arsenal any time soon.

Baloch Insurgency Post 2000

Musharraf's takeover was a turning point for the country in many ways, but more so for Balochistan. He started a number of

Scanned by CamScanner

projects in the province and the government bought Baloch land at its own terms. Balochis wanted their fair-share of revenues from Sui Gas projects as they felt completely left out. They also saw the Musharraf-initiated projects as a plot for Punjabi migration into Baluchistan and state's eternal endeavor to keep the indigenous Balochis at fringes. The Baloch people, therefore, rebelled, initiating a clash with the Pakistani military. Among other things, misunderstanding and lack of dialogue were main reasons for this rebellion. As the author notes, "*Much of the Pakistani army, however, does not see rebellion simply as another form of legitimate political pressure, and this has led to what one might call fatal misunderstandings*" (p. 378). Bugti's killing further widened the rift between the military and Baloch rebels. There have been number of forced disappearances and killings of Balochi rebels at the hands of Pakistani military. The situation has reached a frustrating impasse, and without negotiations, the solution seems impossible.

Reference: Lieven, A. (2012). Pakistan: a hard country. New York: Public Affairs.

Scanned by CamScanner

13

American Foreign Policy and Its Thinkers

By Perry Anderson

About the Author

Perry Anderson is a British historian, particularly interested in intellectual history. He has been the editor of New Left Review for twenty years and still contributes frequently to this bimonthly journal. He has produced some of the most valuable books on history including *The New Old World*, *The Indian Ideology* and *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*. Anderson is currently a professor of history and sociology at University of California, Los Angles.

Overview

Perry Anderson undertakes rigorous research to document historical analysis of American foreign policy and its thinkers. From Roosevelt to Obama, how America sustained global capital and expanded its dominance all over the world is the central point of the book. There are detailed accounts of significant events which present the philosophical underpinnings of American foreign policy.

Scanned by CamScanner

Anderson also highlights the major role and psyche of the very few who shape these policies.

Thirteen Takeaways

Prewar Isolationist Nationalism and Postwar Expansionism

Before the outbreak of World War II, US found itself treading two entirely different ideological trajectories: isolationist nationalism and global expansionism. The former was adopted by laymen farmers and others alike, while the latter was embraced by bankers and corporates. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and other founding fathers of America had expansionist rhetoric up their sleeves too, but until the time of Roosevelt, America only had sketchy notions of such ventures. After the World War II, the confusion vanished and America's goal of sustaining global capital, liberal economy and free trade – hitherto somewhat trammeled – was free from any ideological hindrance. America, at that time was an industrial giant. Its economy outgrew Britain by 5 times and USSR by 3 times. With permanent membership of Security Council and power to veto any dissenting framework, America was ready to expand its power all over the globe. USSR was not a threat for the order to come. As the author puts it, *"Moscow's exact role after victory was a secondary preoccupation"* (Anderson, p. 20).

Security, Containment or Hegemony?

During the cold war years, America legitimized its expansionism under the garb of security. Anderson writes: *"What had to be secured – that is, expanded – against the totalitarian threat of communism was a free world in the image of American liberty"* (p. 25). Essential threat was that the enemy was

Scanned by CamScanner

not acting in accordance with the US' dictates; instead, they were embracing communism. In their private discussions, George Kennan and others were not great fans of democracy, but they had to wear facades to legitimize their imperialist policies for the world outside. America revived Western Europe and Japan and continued to contain threat of communism immediately after the World War II. Some critics call cold war as 'merely a subplot', a microcosm within the broad spectrum of America's global domination. But after 1980's, much of the intellectual world had changed and they were rather skeptical of cold war policies. What was called security and containment in reality was global hegemony. 9/11, much like the attack on Pearl Harbor, gave America another opportunity to exercise its global dominance. From Roosevelt to Obama, every president called their interventionist ventures as *"divinely granted responsibility"* to be a loadstar for the world. Such rhetoric was used to legitimize and justify the imperium.

Strategic Balance or Imbalance?

Anderson describes *"fear and power"* (not the *"Soviet pressure"*), humanitarian impulses and British influence as key factors that shaped American policies. He argues that states do not want a balance of power - an equilibrium – but a balance that is *"in their favor"*, and that was the cornerstone of America's global imperialism. Soviets could never achieve strategic balance even when they claimed to in the 70s. America always had a strategic preponderance. They were well ahead in arms race, had military bases all over the world had a far better economy. On international arena, this ideological war was portrayed as liberal democracy

Scanned by CamScanner

versus totalitarian regimes that demand unconditional subservience. America was very clever in its vocabulary; they had sophisticated euphemisms for capitalism: free trade and liberal democracy.

Liberal Militant

America was largely responsible for catapulting the Baath régime to power corridors in Iraq. CIA assisted Saddam and he helped them *"pinning down Iranian revolution in protracted trench warfare"* (p. 58). But as Iraq seized Kuwait and decided not to allow any foreign oil companies to operate on its oil fields, America decided to give an emphatic response. Operation Desert Storm, within five weeks, annihilated Iraqi army with incessant bombardment and restored Sabah dynasty. There were no domestic repercussions either, unlike the case of Vietnam War. Anderson, through this instance, points out America's cunning diplomacy and their way of handling dissent. They supported Baath regime as long as it was cutting their mustard and ousted it immediately when it was not acting on disposal of US' policies. They later invaded Afghanistan in the name of Global War on Terror (GWOT), and the world knows that oil and other resources are collateral attractions with all these interventions.

Nixon's Policies

Nixon surprised the world by visiting Beijing and embracing Mao. Both of them saw USSR as a potential threat. Then, three months later, he visited Moscow and told Brezhnev about the Chinese animosity for them. This left both China and USSR in a desire to compete for *"...privileged relations with United States"* (p. 50). US then assisted Chilean military to

Scanned by CamScanner

dismantle the Allende regime in South America. After a month, they demolished Arab nationalism *"embodied by Nasser's regime"* (p. 50). Unanimously, US had become the diplomatic master of Middle East.

End to Cold War

After years of arms race, strategic depth and political and economic maneuvers, the cold war ultimately ended. After the inglorious end to Vietnam War – which was hard to disentangle from the cold war – Kabul became USSR's Vietnam. America left no stone unturned in its quest to outsmart USSR and started a proxy war by assisting Zia's Mujahedeen – who were fighting Communism – with billions of dollars and all kinds of support. The result was that by December 1991, there was no USSR on the world map, with America gaining more buoyancy.

Obama's First Term: Four Years of Annihilation

With a democratic president taking over in 2009, many analysts expected a change, but to their dismay nothing changed regarding America's imperialist policy. Obama administration not only retained the same old staff as hired by the Republicans vis-à-vis the 'war on terror' but also took wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to new heights. In the author's words:

> Before entering the Senate, Obama had opposed the war in Iraq; in the Senate, he voted $360 billion for it. Campaigning for the presidency, he criticized the war in the name of another one... Within a year of taking office, US troops had been doubled to 100,000 and Special Forces operations increased sixfold, in a bid to

Scanned by CamScanner

> repeat the military success in Iraq, where Obama had merely to stick to his predecessor's schedule for a subsequent withdrawal. (p. 67)

Afghanistan, however, proved to be wholly different from Iraq owing to its larger size, guerilla-favouring terrain and diminished support from the locals. Frustrated with the difficulties in Afghanistan, Obama administration turned to Pakistan and significantly increased the frequency of drone strikes in North Waziristan, killing hundreds of women and children along with a handful of militants. Obama normalised the drone use and made it *"the weapon of choice for the White House"* (p. 67). As Anderson puts it:

> Assassinations by drone, initiated under his predecessor, became the Nobel laureate's trademark. In his first term, Obama ordered one such execution every four days—over ten times the rate under Bush. (p. 67-68)

Meanwhile, in Libya, Qaddafi was facing growing uprising against his military regime. Because he was not from one of the friendly regimes in the region and because there were grounds for *"humanitarian intervention"*, Obama administration *"launched missile and air attacks on Libya without congressional authorization"* (p. 68), eventually deposing Qaddafi through Operation Odyssey Dawn.

In the Middle East, US policy has always been shaped by the interests of its allies in the region. Obama, being no different from his predecessors, took the strategic goals of Israel into account and successfully cornered Iran in terms of international trade owing to its nuclear aspirations. Though the irony that the ally state, Israel,

Scanned by CamScanner

has itself been possessing nuclear arsenals for long needs no mention.

In the meantime, the civil war in Syria and the rising against the Assad regime provided US with strong reasons to intervene, especially when taken into account Syria's traditional links with Russia and Iran. But because of decreased domestic support for *"overseas adventures"* and the danger of angering Russia, US did not intervene directly but relied *"instead on Qatar and Saudi Arabia to funnel weapons and funds to them [the rebels], and Turkey and Jordan to host and organize them"* (p. 69).

Obama's Second Term: Integration of the Developed World

While the first term of Obama was marked with annihilation, the second term was about *"integration of the developed world"* (p. 71). To that end, Obama put forward Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Agreement to strengthen ties with Europe and Trans-Pacific Partnership to access the Japanese market that has long been protected by layers of barriers. While the Obama administration was busy waging wars in Middle East, *"China was becoming the world's largest exporter (2010) and greatest manufacturing economy (2012)"* (p. 72). Fearing the Chinese ascent, the Obama administration started pivoting to Asia in order *"to surround the PRC with a necklace of US allies and military installations"* (p. 72).

Obama's Legacy

Obama's two terms might not have many positives for the world at large and the US citizens, but the era was certainly in line with the dictums of imperialism. From Middle East to South Asia

Scanned by CamScanner

and from Europe to Australia, Obama administration set the stage for American empire to prosper. With no strong governments in sight in Syria, Egypt and Iraq, the threat to the imperial power of US seems to have been dismantled. Even the apparent defeat in Afghanistan and convoluted relations with Iran do not seem be disastrous at all. Following the British legacy of 'divide and conquer', US has done well in widening the schism within the Islamic world. By *"backing Shi'a against Sunni in Iraq, [and] Sunni against Shi'a in Syria"* (p. 71), US has demonstrated that making Shi'as pit against Sunnis serves its own strategic interests. As for Russia, domestic opposition and economic troubles have put the country in a position that its ability to influence the world beyond its own borders is seriously questionable. All in all, *"United States continues to have the Middle East largely to itself"* (p. 71).

Obama's eight years in office have not only resulted in multiple wars and killings but also drafted a template for ruthless counterinsurgency in the name of 'war on terror'. He created *"sixty-three new counterterrorism agencies"* (p. 68), made drone warfare a norm, set the frequency of overt and covert operations really high and took surveillance to heights from which even the George Orwell's fictional setting (in his novel '1984') would shy away.

Foreign Policy Ideals

Two ideological legacies, as per Kissinger, influence America's thinking. Those are of Roosevelt and Wilson: the first demands a balance of power in the world; the seconds demands a commitment to *"put an end to arbitrary powers everywhere"* (p. 79). Wilson – although initially disregarded – eventually prevailed

Scanned by CamScanner

over Roosevelt's ideas in the long run. Nixon had a portrait of Wilson in the Oval Office. Anderson mentions Kissinger's words in his book who notes: *"In all this time, Wilson's principles have remained the bedrock of American foreign policy thinking"* (p. 79).

The Architects of Hegemony, War, Insurgencies and More

Anderson debunks all the myths of George Kennan being a very wise and sober thinker. Through multitude of examples, he exposes Kennan and calls him "*"unstable and excitable"* (p. 24). Brzezinski, Kissinger, Acheson, and all other architects of American foreign policy indulge in a lot of mutual respect, rather than a mutual critique. US gives them liberty to perform experiments on other countries, which almost serve as lab-rats for them, without any fear of consequences. These policy makers are idealists. They do not foresee any consequences of the policies devised by them, which accounts for the unrest in Middle East, Afghanistan and various other regions.

The Realists

Anderson praises the realism and scholarship of Noam Chomsky, Bacevich and many others like them. They are like a voice in wilderness – people who defy grotesque madness and idealism through their work. Chomsky's critique of American foreign policy is privy to none. He brazenly criticizes America's interference in the matters of other countries. These are the kind of people who should lead the American think tank, but that would not serve the agenda of the empire that wants to continue expanding its power all over the globe.

Scanned by CamScanner

The Need of Repair and Adjustment

Anderson asserts that America has undoubtedly mishandled situation beyond its own castle and has increased its global dominance manifold over the course of time, but it has also done a lot of good.

> The hegemony of the United States continues to serve both the particular interests of the nation and the universal interests of humanity. Certainly, it needs adjustment to the hour, and on occasion has been mishandled. But of its benefits to the world there can be no serious question. (p. 108)

None the less, there is no argument over the point that the US foreign policy is in need of serious repair. From brutal assassinations through drones and other means to fierce interventions in other countries' affairs and from "*universal surveillance*" to cyber-warfare, United States ought to bring major adjustments to various policy areas. It is only after considerable repair and adjustment that the world would see US as the justified lodestar.

References: Anderson, Perry. *American foreign policy and its thinkers*. Verso, 2017. Print. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

16

Capital in the Twenty-First Century

By Thomas Piketty

About the Author

Thomas Piketty is an economist of French origin whose works mostly pertain to income and wealth inequality. Apart from being the author of the international best-seller *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, he has written several other books including *The Economics of Inequality*, *Chronicles* and *Why Save the Bankers?*. At present, he is a Centennial Professor at London School of Economics' International Inequalities Institute and an associate chair at Paris School of Economics.

Overview

Capital in the Twenty-First Century establishes that concentration of wealth in a few hands – income inequality in other words – is neither a recent development nor an abnormality in the regular global economic environment. In order to prove his point, the French author amassed a huge amount of data going back decades and centuries into European and American history. His

Scanned by CamScanner

research depicted the evolution of inequality from the beginning of industrial revolution and proved that the European society of 18th and 19th century was not only unequal but socially unjust, despite the ongoing industrial revolution. He stated that it was not until the chaos of the two world wars and the Great Depression that this pattern disrupted. America, on the other hand, the writer claims was far less inegalitarian in the beginning of nineteenth century, primarily because the US economists of the time, such as Willford King, did not want the New World to follow the footsteps of old Europe. So, the *"fear of growing to resemble Europe was part of the reason why the United States in 1910–1920 pioneered a very progressive estate tax on large fortunes" (Piketty, p. 247).*

However, the *"perceptions of inequality, redistribution, and national identity changed a great deal over the course of the twentieth century"*, as US today is far more inegalitarian than the U.K. or other Anglo-Saxon countries. In sum, the book is an attempt by the author to place the question of distribution back at the heart of socio-economic analysis. In his words,

> What was the good of industrial development, what was the good of all the technological innovations, toil, and population movements if, after half a century of industrial growth, the condition of the masses was still just as miserable as before, and all lawmakers could do was prohibit factory labor by children under the age of eight? (p. 13)

Three Takeaways

Wealth Accumulation at the Top

One of the greatest insights provided by Piketty in his book is the constant accumulation of wealth at the top. Before Piketty,

Scanned by CamScanner

Anthony Atkinson and Emmanuel Saez, no one had talked about the subject of inequality in such detail. And even if some did, they never highlighted the top 1 percent's contribution to this problem. Therefore, it came as a huge revelation when Piketty and his colleagues pointed out the ever-rising incomes of the top 1 and 0.1 percents.

The income of these two top percentiles is presented in a huge U-shaped curve in the book, extending from the beginning of 20th century till now. The arc shows that before the First World War, the top one percent received 20 percent of the total income earned by both Britain and America. By 1950, this share had decreased to 10 percent, thus, lowering the rate of inequality. From 1950 till 1980, this level of income inequality was stable. However, 1980 onwards, the incomes of one percent have again surged drastically all over the world. In the US, they are back to where they were exactly about a century ago. In Piketty's words:

> The complex and contradictory relation to inequality largely persists in the United States to this day: on the one hand this is a country of egalitarian promise, a land of opportunity for millions of immigrants of modest background; on the other hand it is a land of extremely brutal inequality. (p. 117)

Earned vs. Capital Income

Another important revelation that makes Piketty's work of utmost significance is his emphasis on income generated through wealth/assets/capital instead of the salaried income. He shows that even today unequal wealth or ownership of assets, instead of unequal pay, is the key driver of income disparities just like it was

Scanned by CamScanner

back in the nineteenth century – also known as Europe's Belle Époque or America's Gilded Age. This is because the rate of return on (inherited) wealth is greater than the earned income under the current capitalist system.

In short, "*...under such conditions, it is almost inevitable that inherited wealth will dominate wealth amassed from a lifetime's labor by a wide margin, and the concentration of capital will attain extremely high levels*" (p. 25). Piketty uses economic history to depict a constant race between capital accumulation and income growth and shows that as long as the former is ahead of the latter, economic gap will not only exist but widen with time.

Policy Lessons to Regulate Capital in the 21st Century

Piketty concludes his book by providing policy reforms he deems will help the human race in terms of economic inequality. He sketches out a "*social state*" that, he believes, not only focusses on redistribution through pensions and healthcare but also enforces adequate tax rates on wealth.

> The right solution is a progressive annual tax on capital. This will make it possible to avoid an endless inegalitarian spiral while preserving competition and incentives for new instances of primitive accumulation. (p. 399)

He supports this economic reform by comparing it with the overt use of inflation as a means to reduce inequality over the years.

> When it comes to decreasing inequalities of wealth for good or reducing unusually high levels of public debt, a

Scanned by CamScanner

> progressive tax on capital is generally a better tool than inflation. (p. 382)

In other words, Piketty's logic for this policy recommendation is rather simple. He states that instead of redistributing wealth through taxation on income as done for most of the 20th century, taxes in the 21st century should be imposed on the accumulated wealth or capital.

> A tax on capital would be a less violent and more efficient response to the eternal problem of private capital and its return. A progressive levy on individual wealth would reassert control over capitalism in the name of the general interest while relying on the forces of private property and competition. Each type of capital would be taxed in the same way, with no discrimination a priori, in keeping with the principle that investors are generally in a better position than the government to decide what to invest in. (p. 371)

Through this reform, Piketty challenges the most prevalent belief that mild distribution through welfare services is social justice. He demonstrates through sufficient historical data that such a low-spirited approach towards distribution can only achieve rising income and social gap. Democratic institutions today do so less in addressing the problem that a fundamental question is bound to arise: *"can we imagine political institutions that might regulate today's global patrimonial capitalism justly as well as efficiently?"* (p. 330)

The writer calls for another revolution consisting of 80% tax on high income earners, 15% tax on capital and complete

Scanned by CamScanner

transparency in all bank transactions, hoping to achieve a model that caters to all the limitations posed by existing global capitalism.

Reference: Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the 21st Century*. Harvard University Press. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

17

The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics

By Ayesha Jalal

About the Author

Ayesha Jalal is a renowned historian, currently serving as a professor of history at Tufts University. Having received her doctorate from the Cambridge University, she was also appointed as a fellow worker at the Woodrow Wilson Center. Her works are mostly related to the history of South Asia.

Overview

Rarely anyone believed in the continued existence of Pakistan at the time of its inception. It was ordinarily thought of as a state which would soon come back to the fold. Not surprisingly, it was Lord Mountbatten who proverbially remarked Pakistan as a state being "put up as a tent". This book presents a chronicle of struggle for Pakistan and how, in the words of author, "*...the proverbial tent has (been) metaphorically transformed into a sprawling military barrack*". The book delineates the storyline of

Scanned by CamScanner

military coups and political anarchy in the history of Pakistan, coinciding with influential global events. Bestowing an eye-opening account of the destruction brought upon by the state of Pakistan itself, this books delves into ideological depths by analyzing "...*an ill-defined Islamic ideology... that aims to reinforce belief in constructed national myths*".

Five Takeaways

Creation of Pakistan and the Subsequent National Identity Crisis

Many have put forth theories as to why and when Pakistan came into being. However, such a creation – division – on an enormous scale can hardly have a unified cause of its foundation. Theories suggesting the birth of Pakistan's ideology – ranging from Arab invasion in 712 CE to the 1857 revolt and from Sir Sayyad's "*Two Nation*" to the All-India Muslim League's genesis – have been around the scholastic environment of the country ever since its birth in 1947. This "*unresolved debate on how to square the state's self- proclaimed Islamic identity with the obligations of a modern nation- state*" (Jalal, p. 12) has led to a national identity crisis.

Events such as the Lucknow Pact 1916, the Ottoman Caliphate crisis in 1920 and the subsequent Non-Cooperation Movement by Gandhi, various constitutional reforms and political elections, global politics and the 'Lahore Resolution' 1940, to name a few, have all been key drivers of the Pakistan movement. Despite the leader of the movement – Jinnah – making it clear at numerous occasions that the idea of Pakistan is based on "...*political and*

Scanned by CamScanner

religious opposition to the congress" (p. 26). Islamists gave a religious cover to the Pakistan ideology.

Paying no heed to such conviction, Pakistan soon became the target of religious sentiments. The author aptly observes, *"Brought up on state- sponsored national yarns about the past, Pakistanis are at a loss over how to settle matters of national identity and the nature of the state— democratic or authoritarian, secular or Islamic"* (p. 55).

Journey from Elected to Non-Elected Institutions

The institution of military in Pakistan became the most dominant one in the least amount of time. Keeping in mind the initial problems of the newly-born state, the *"authoritarian trappings of the colonial state"* it inherited and the inability of political leadership (especially after the death of Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan) to sustain the political and economic conditions of Pakistan, it is reasonable to argue that the *"military-bureaucratic"* nexus had the ideal environment to dominate the state. The pace further accelerated by the *"...regional rivalry with India and the international imperatives of Cold War politics"* (p. 61). Accumulatively, all this led to a form of government which, in the author's view, *"...was as close to a military- bureaucratic conception of a presidential system of government"* (p. 95).

The first martial law was imposed in Pakistan in October 1958. It marked the start of a transition (from elected to non-elected institutions) that *"was to endure for decades to come"* (p. 99). At the time the military coup was executed, there were *"mixed"* reactions of the public towards it: the middle-class regretted the

Scanned by CamScanner

failure of democracy, common citizens were "*gratified*" to welcome fair market practices, the "*politically more sophisticated*" were worried because they believed that "*cosmetic changes were no answer to Pakistan's deep-seated political and economic problems*" (p. 100) and those who were "*far-sighted*" were troubled by the predictions of army becoming corrupted. Although the new regime introduced several economic reforms, there were numerous political developments, or lack thereof, that made the democrats raise eyebrows. Implementation of the Basic Democracies Order in 1959 was one such development that, according to the author, was "*a blatant attempt at institutionalizing bureaucratic control over the political process*" (p. 105). This was then followed by the Constitution of 1962, which was "*denounced... as undemocratic*" (p. 108) by the opposition as soon as the martial law was uplifted. Then there were issues regarding Pakistan's foreign policy that perplexed many. The opposition against Ayub grew exponentially when too much dependence on America, during the 1965 war, exposed "*...the weaknesses and incoherence in the Pakistani Army's command and execution skills*" (p. 124). Opposing such a stance on foreign policy, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto argued in favor of a more "*independent foreign policy (that was) consistent with (Pakistan's) sovereignty*" (p. 110). Moreover, grievances of the Eastern Wing remained unaddressed; the Western counterpart became urbanized and East Pakistan "*was left out in the cold*" (p. 113).

All of the afore-stated political and economic problems converged and became a focal point for public opposition towards

Scanned by CamScanner

Ayub Khan's dictatorship. Soon after Ayub's regime came to an end, it was Yahya Khan who became the new "*Chief Martial Law Administrator*" to have abrogated the constitution. Subsequently, general elections were announced to be held in 1970 to restore democracy. But the worsened political and economic conditions, results of General elections, unaddressed grievances of East Pakistan and the consequent war with India in 1971 led to the disintegration of Pakistan, which the author refers to as "*the watershed of 1971*" (p. 142).

From Bhutto to Zia

The responsibility of "*picking up the pieces of a dismembered and demoralized country... fell on the eager shoulders of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto*" (p. 177). Bhutto was bent upon transforming industrial and agricultural sectors along with introducing administrative, military, and foreign policy reforms. Such reforms were, however, short-lived. Soon enough Bhutto found himself amidst an array of opponents including the armed revolt in Balochistan, "*against the backdrop*" of which "*the religious right found its moment of glory*" (p. 203). Ultimately, the political conflicts paved way towards "*third military intervention*" which was about to "*herald unparalleled changes in the political and ideological profile*" (p. 217) of Pakistan. The era of '*Islamization*' under Zia-ul-Haq started and with it came such ideological and military developments that would continue to haunt the country for decades to come. The author writes, "*Islamic ideology and military might were the twin pillars on which general Zia-ul-Haq began building his new order*" (p. 217). It was his belief that army was the

Scanned by CamScanner

only force that could safeguard Pakistan's territorial and ideological frontiers. The *"self-styled vice-regent of Allah"* introduced myriad of laws, most *"egregious"* of which were the Hudood laws (p. 224).

Democracy Changing Hands

It was only after the death of Zia-ul-Haq that the *"democracy reinstated"* itself in Pakistan, but could not take roots. Both of the elected premiers (Benazir Bhutoo and Nawaz Sharif) and their assemblies *"had been sent packing on identical charges—corruption, nepotism, and maladministration"* (p. 277).

The People's Party, under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, gained the majority of votes in the general elections held after the death of Zia and formed the cabinet in 1988. However, just after two years, on charges of *"unconscionable corruption and maladministration"* (p. 271), she was *"dumped"* by President Ishaq Khan. It was then Muslim League Nawaz, under the premiership of Nawaz Sharif, which formed the government. But soon Nawaz found *"himself in a withering struggle with Ishaq Khan over the appointment of next army chief"* (p. 277). Similar to what Ishaq had resorted to during the government of Benazir, he dumped Sharif also. But this time the Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled in favour *"of Sharif's petition challenging his dismissal and the dissolution of the parliament"* (p. 278). The rivalry between Sharif and Ishaq met its fate only when, under the terms set by army chief, both resigned.

Subsequently, in the elections of 1993, *"Benazir's return to power was a forgone conclusion"* (p. 279). To her dismay, and once again on charges of corruption, Benazir Bhutto's government was dismissed the second time in 1996. Commenting upon the elections

Scanned by CamScanner

in the following year, the author laments, *"Tired of politicians taking turns in looting the public exchequer, the 1997 elections saw the lowest ever turnouts, with estimates ranging from a mere 26 percent to 35 percent"* (p. 292). For the second time, Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan-Muslim-League-Nawaz (PML-N) party won the majority of votes. Two constitutional amendments (13th and 14th) were passed to prevent an ouster, *"giving the prime minister untrammeled powers over the executive and the Parliament"* (p. 297). But this time, it was neither the executive nor the Parliament which overthrew Sharif, rather it was General Pervez Musharraf—selected by Sharif himself and the *"appointment [of whom] entailed superseding three officers"* (p. 302)—who imposed martial law. The decade of democracy ended and dictatorship unfolded again.

The Musharraf era also coincided with enhanced military cooperation with United States. The justification Musharraf laid for *"supporting America's ill-phrased 'War on Terror'"* (p.323) was Pakistan being always *"first"*. Soon it turned out, it was *"Musharraf First— prolonging his stay in power"* (p.323).

Strengthening the Parliament

Democracy, once again, saw itself in the halls of parliament when *"...one of the most vilified individuals [Asif Ali Zardari] in the country had assumed presidential office"* (p. 352) with a comfortable majority in 2008 general elections. To their dismay, Pakistani citizens found themselves drenched deep in the evils of extremism, economic slump, acute energy shortages, bad governance, ostensible civil-military strife and judicial intervention. However, after an agonizing long era of dictatorships, Pakistan had

Scanned by CamScanner

started its journey toward a parliamentary form of government, with the unanimous approval of the Eighteenth Amendment in 2010. Although, the Zardari-led government faced insurmountable challenges (floods during 2010, cases of killing for blasphemy charges, *"anarchic violence"* in Karachi, drone attacks and insurgency in FATA and Pakistan's *"First Judicial Coup"* (p. 367)), but the *"the elected governments at the center and the provinces completed their constitutional terms without a judicial or military intervention"* (p. 371).

Reference: Jalal, A. (2014). *The struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim homeland and global politics*. Harvard University Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

18

Men Explain Things to Me

By Rebecca Solnit

About the Author

Rebecca Solnit is a human rights activist, a historian, an unapologetic feminist and an acclaimed and award winning author. She has written fifteen books which address the issues of politics, environment, art and culture, gender equality and more. Some of her works include *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster* and *Men Explain Things to Me*. She is currently working as a contributing editor of Harper's.

Overview

While some may call this book feminist propaganda literature, *Men Explain Things to Me* is an unsparing and satirical take on the casual misogyny faced by women every day. This book is a collection of essays that address everything from mansplaining (men condescendingly explaining things to women which women already know) to toxic masculinity, rape statistics and denying

Scanned by CamScanner

women the right to exist as separate entities. Using empathy as a cornerstone, Solnit portrays the injustices faced by women throughout the world, quoting the examples of Jyoti Singh (New Delhi) and Malala Yousafzai (Pakistan) with sharp, succinct and hard-hitting words.

Citing her own experiences, she puts across the fact that the expertise of women in a particular area can be easily dismissed because of just being women, signifying that how intelligence, adroitness and excellence are perceived to be belonging to men only.

Two Takeaways

Countering Mansplaining is a Daily Battle

Solnit, a prolific author and an overall successful person, has herself faced several instances where men have tried to belittle her by patronizingly explaining things to her she already knows. She also construes that this goes beyond the confines of everyday conversation. Men find themselves entitled to their opinions wherever they please; however, the same liberty does not extend itself to women.

> It's the presumption that makes it hard, at times, for any woman in any field; that keeps women from speaking up and from being heard when they dare; that crushes young women into silence by indicating, the way harassment on the street does, that this is not their world. (Solnit, p. 7)

Solnit's discourse is reminiscent of Deborah Tannen's work: both of these women state that where men can say whatever

Scanned by CamScanner

they want and disparage whoever they want (usually women), women have to very carefully select everything that comes out of their mouths because the world they exist in is inherently patriarchal.

Toxic Masculinity and Power

Throughout the book Solnit maintains that rape and violence have little to do with sex and more to do with power. *"Violence is first of all authoritarian. It begins with this premise: I have the right to control you"* (p. 17). It is a savage system of control which enables the physical and emotional exploitation of women. Solnit cites statistics which reflect that women are abused and murdered by those close to them – who think they have power over them: blood relations, boyfriends and husbands. The need to control their female counterparts has been entrenched in the male psyche by the patriarchal institutionalization of toxic masculinity – a phenomenon that hurts both men and women in different ways: where it stops men from expressing their emotions and embracing their feminine side, it upends women's lives.

Reference: Solnit, R. (2014). *Men Explain Things to Me*. Haymarket Book

Scanned by CamScanner

19

The God Market: How Globalization is Making India More Hindu

By Meera Nanda

About the Author

Meera Nanda is US-based Indian author, philosopher and scientist. She has written several books that have irked Hindu nationalists, as she is widely known for critiquing Hindu nationalism in India. Some of her works include *Prophets Facing Backward*, *Science in Saffron* and *The God Market*. Having received two PhDs in the fields of science and philosophy, she is currently a teacher at Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali.

Overview

Nanda has been called a Muslim/Christian apologist, among myriad of other things by Hindu nationalists, maybe even rightly so because her book debunks the myth of secular India by stating that capitalist version of Hinduism is on the rise among all classes in India – elite, middle and lower. She starts out by defining

Scanned by CamScanner

globalization, neo-liberalism and secularization with respect to their meanings in India. She then explains in detail, with statistical data backing her, how globalization has turned India from a secular state into a state that uses Hinduism to promote its economy and sell goods while keeping up with the changing socio-political tides. She also states that in current India, the state has little to do with economics and more to do with the propagation of religiosity.

Four Takeaways

Inequality in Neo-liberal India

When people fall below the poverty line and most of the population lives on half a dollar income per day without any welfare security system, they tend to find solace in religion. Such is the case in India. Over the years, the number of millionaires has rapidly increased in India. But at the same time, the poor have become extremely poor. Rich people's capacity to substantiate their economic position depends upon the downward economic spiral of the poor. While the number of millionaires is doubling with each passing year, *"India is backsliding on the Human Development Index, or HDI, which measures well-being along three dimensions of health, education, and income"* (Nanda, p. 43). There are multiple reasons for the abovementioned scenario: high paid jobs are readily available to well-educated, fluent English speakers only, and there is a very tiny population privileged to get such jobs. Secondly, the land-grabbing business of the corporate is resulting in colossal marginalization of the already poor. To make matters worse, the employer-employee relationship borders on religious customs rather than legal grounds. So, poor are exploited

Scanned by CamScanner

in the name of religion and they are too backward to understand complex underpinnings of corporate sector's dynamics.

Most of the benefits of globalization go to Hindus, while Dalits and Muslims suffer heavily. *"Muslims in India are faring much worse than even the Dalits. They are largely self employed-only 13 per cent of the entire Muslim population has salaried jobs in public or private enterprises, with barely 5 percent of public sector jobs going to Muslims"* (p. 47).

Hinduism on the Rise

While India may be seen by outsiders as a secular state, Nanda states that religiosity is on the rise now more than ever. She maintains that religion, with the increase in gentrification among the middle class, has now got a stronghold on the society. In such a scenario, Indians find it extremely hard to bifurcate science and mythology. Compromising scientific method and rationale, they believe that their conventional religious beliefs are based on genuine principals of science. *"This kind of Vedic/Hindu scientism seems to have a wide appeal for those who consider themselves to be educated and modern"* (p. 70). This religiosity is somehow more radical and ardent than ever, taking over all aspects of economy, politics and culture by catering to all socio-psychological needs of the Indian masses.

The State–Temple–Corporate Trio

Nanda states that due to the entrenchment of neo-liberalist notions and religiosity in India, the state is now endorsing religious beliefs and practices. Government's spending on religious tourism and other such seemingly perfect and secular practices has skyrocketed over the past few years. Such a spending has been

Scanned by CamScanner

increased to cement the Hindu practices deep into the society, and it is sponsored by the state-corporate-Hinduism trio. *"The state-temple-corporate complex works to the advantage of Hinduism"* (p. 109). Far be it for India to be secular, apart from promoting religious tourism, the state has also now mandated religiosity in education, making it extremely hard to differentiate church from state, or in this case, the temple from state. Nanda writes about the bizarre partnership between state, religion and corporate sector: *"As the neo-liberal state has entered into a partnership with the private sector, a cosy triangular relationship has emerged between the state, the corporate sector, and the Hindu establishment"* (p. 108).

Entitlement or Endowment?

In modern day India, the line between science and religion is gets blurrier by the day. Nanda, through statistical evidence, shows that most of India's Hindus believe that they are the best nation in the world. Nanda says that they believe that somehow being Hindu makes them adaptable to the changing trends in technology and other aspects of globalization. This is the result of state's policy to intermingle religion and education in India. Even the well-educated individuals think that they have some sort of inherent genetic preponderance that makes them superior to people who do not practice Hinduism. Nanda mentions: *"A great many computer professionals, important scientists and well-respected intellectuals have bought into this idea that Hinduism predisposes Indians to become great software engineers"* (p. 153).

Reference: Nanda, M. (2011). *The God Market: How Globalization is Making India More Hindu*. Monthly Review Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

20

Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century: Globalization, Super-Exploitation, and Capitalism's Final Crisis

By John Smith

About the Author

John Smith (PhD, University of Sheffield) is a writer, researcher and an academic. In his earlier years, John Smith has held menial jobs such as being a bus driver and oil rig worker, which is why he understands the plight of the working class so well. He is also an activist and has worked to promote solidarity among Latin American states.

Overview

Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century is a scathing commentary on the effects of neoliberalism on the global political economy. Smith uses statistical data and in depth research to explain how contemporary capitalism is wholly dependent on the exploitation of millions of destitute workers in cramped factories in the Global South. Smith also destroys the myth of the New World

Scanned by CamScanner

where everyone can get rich by working hard. He states that wages paid are not based on productivity, but the whims of the capitalist bourgeoisie. If one wishes to understand capitalism in the twenty-first century, this book is best suited for the said purpose.

Three Takeaways

Contemporary Capitalism's Exploitation of the Poor Touching New Heights

Smith, at the beginning of the book, cites the example of the Bangladesh's Rana Plaza crisis, a plaza that collapsed killing 1,133 garment workers and wounding 2,500. Those poor workers, who died, were the children of a lesser-God, exploited and mistreated in a world run by corporate giants. *"Adding to the sense of outrage felt by many is the fact that, the day before, cracks had opened up in the building's structure and an initial inspection resulted in its evacuation and a recommendation that it remain closed"* (Smith, p. 9). The situation is not much different in the rest of the Global South. Smith asserts, *"The starvation wages, death-trap factories, and fetid slums in Bangladesh are representative of the conditions endured by hundreds of millions of working people throughout the Global South"* (p. 10). The exploitation of the poor and destitute is a recurring theme in the book. Smith takes on capitalism's exploitation by bringing to light the long hours, unjust and very low wages with zero to little job security and unsafe and unsanitary working conditions.

'Super-exploitation' as a Growing Capitalist Trend

Smith brings the Marxist idea of *"super-exploitation"* in focus and attempts to find its relevance in today's world. Karl Marx took it as a practice of *"pushing wages...below the value of labour*

Scanned by CamScanner

power" (p. 240). Smith asserts that super-exploitation is not only relevant in the current era of neoliberal capitalism but is pretty much prevalent. Outsourcing to poorer countries, being a cornerstone of the modern version of capitalism, helps corporations reap huge surplus values, all of which go into the pockets of the top 1% dwelling in Global North. For example, while a worker in Bangladesh only makes about 0.35 pounds for one t-shirt, the t-shirt is actually retailed at 4.95 pounds.

Quoting Higginbottom (a Kingston University professor who has explored the concept of super-exploitation at length in his book *The System of Accumulation in South Africa)*, Smith makes a strong case regarding the difference between the wages of working class of Global South and that of Global North, while also showing that super-exploitation cannot be separated from imperialism.

> The idea of super-exploitation needs to be conceptually generalised at the necessary level of abstraction and incorporated in the theory of imperialism. Super-exploitation is a specific condition within the capitalist mode of production ... the hidden common essence defining imperialism. The working class of the oppressed nations/Third World/Global South is systematically paid below the value of labour power of the working class of oppressor nations/First World/Global North. This is not because the Southern working class produces less value, but because it is more oppressed and more exploited. (p. 239)

Contemporary Capitalism and Gender Inequality

Smith concurs with the idea that capitalism is largely responsible for gender inequality. Women are joining the workforce

Scanned by CamScanner

now more than ever, especially from South Asian countries. According to Smith, with worsening economic conditions, their desire to escape from the confines of an inherently patriarchal and oppressive society has increased. Building upon the idea of "*housewifization*", capitalist corporations initially hired women to join their work force due to their docile nature. "*But the more that women gain employment as workers, the more they come to identify themselves as workers, and to demand equality with male workers—potentially negating the main reason for capitalists' special interest in them*" (p. 127). So, the move to hire easily available housewives has actually backfired. As these women started working along with men and considering how they were paid low and treated as inferior, they began realizing their existing status and limited gender roles. Even if these women are not in a position to dismantle the male-dominance in their respective societies, they are at least well aware of their rights and the existing notoriously patriarchal cultural hierarchy. These women work extremely long hours, are not paid the same amount of money as men and are not given the same status as their male counterparts. All of their work and the income these women earn are considered as merely 'supplementary' to that of the money earned by the men.

Reference: Smith, J. (2016). *Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century: Globalization, Super-Exploitation, and Capitalism's Final Crisis*. Monthly Review Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

21

Kingdom of the Unjust: Behind the US-Saudi Connection

By Medea Benjamin

About the Author

Medea Benjamin is a US-based political activist and the co-founder of Code Pink, an NGO that promotes peace and social justice movements. She is also the co-founder of the human rights group Global Exchange. Apart from being at the forefront of anti-drone movement, she has been a great proponent of the rights of Palestinians and has vehemently opposed US intervention in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. In 2007, she was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts.

Overview

Benjamin criticizes US for their outcry against Iran for crimes of a similar or lesser magnitude as compared to KSA, while maintaining their love-affair with the kingdom. She writes detailed accounts of the draconian laws that are prevalent in Saudi Arabia. There are innumerable things wrong within the kingdom: there is a

Scanned by CamScanner

large scale human rights abuse; there is gender apartheid; migrant workers are unhappy; and there is a rising great class division. Moreover, their radical religious ideology incorporates extremism. Benjamin also presents the historical origins of *Wahhabism*, how it incorporates terrorism and how US continues to have a strong bond with KSA, mainly because of abundant oil reserves and an avenue for selling military weapons.

Six Takeaways

Inside the Kingdom

At the start, Benjamin writes about the origins of Saudi Arabia and how *Wahhabism* flourished in the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia is the last absolute monarchy on earth, and the royal family who founded it runs the whole system. The only elected bodies in the country are municipal councils. KSA's largest oil reserves have helped them gain domestic and international influence. Purely because of oil, in 2014, KSA was ranked world's nineteenth largest economy, with the eighth highest GDP per capita. But oil money is not shared equally. According to a survey mentioned in Benjamin's book "*20 percent of population, if not more, lives in crippling poverty*" (Benjamin, p. 14). Religion, an incredibly strict interpretation of it, guides almost all aspects of life. There's religious police which makes sure that no one deviates from the strict *sharia* laws. There is a multitude of incidents mentioned in the book which highlight the abuses carried out by the religious police. Hajj used to be a spiritual activity, with people from all kinds of religious sects practicing it in their own way. But after 1932, it can only be performed in a certain way, which Salafism

Scanned by CamScanner

recommend. Although banned for general public, Saudi elite continues to live a western way of life by throwing lavish parties – using drugs, alcohol and prostitutes.

Religious State without Religious Freedom

Practitioners of various religions live and work in KSA, but the official religion of the state is *Wahhabi* Islam. No one from any other religion can practice his or her faith in public. People from non-Islamic faith are not allowed to have their places of worship, with atheism being tantamount to terrorism inside the kingdom. United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) gives KSA *"its worst ranking: Tier 1 Country of Particular Concern"*, meaning that the state commits *"systemic, ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom"* (Benjamin, p 19.). Religious police storms into houses and confiscates Bibles and anything that is remotely related to a religion other than Islam. Strict *sharia* law applies to everyone living inside the kingdom, regardless of their beliefs. Shi'ite minority is paid less than others, mainly because of notorious *shia-sunni* divide. Benjamin mentions the historical aspects of this divide which is not privy to all Muslims. The treatment towards Sufi Muslims is equally discriminatory. Benjamin mentions words of Wasif Kabli, a 59 years old Sufi businessman, who says: *"We were upgraded from infidels to people who are ignorant and practicing their religion wrong"* (p. 21).

No Freedom of Expression

Any type of religious, ideological, political or economic dissent is a punishable offense, according to draconian laws of the

Scanned by CamScanner

kingdom. Government controls all the media "*with members of royal family owning major stakes in news outlets*" (p. 25). Bloggers have to get a license from the ministry of information in order to write and publish their blogs. "*A 2011 royal decree amended the press law to criminalize any criticism of the country's Grand Mufti*" (p. 25). One such example which highlights the ferocious crackdown on bloggers by the kingdom is that of Raif Badawi, who created the blog 'Free Saudi Liberals'. He was arrested in 2012 and was charged with death penalty. However, with international outcry, the punishment was changed to 10 years imprisonment, 2500 dollars fine and a thousand lashes. Badawi wrote satirical posts and called for separation of religion from state. There are many other such cases of violation of freedom of expression.

Gender Apartheid

KSA is perhaps one of the most misogynistic and gender-segregated countries in the world. The situation has changed a little over time with women rights campaigns and late King Abdullah's reforms, but it is still far from being perfect. Women require male guardians for almost everything that surrounds their life. Benjamin provides detailed accounts of this gender apartheid in KSA. Most women are not allowed to play sports and none of them can watch it as spectators. They have very limited job options, their dress-code is very strict, and coup de grace: they are not allowed to drive vehicles. Contrarily, a man in KSA can marry four women. He can marry another four after divorcing the previous four, signifying the fact how women are treated as men's property.

Scanned by CamScanner

However, the author construes that the situation has improved a bit and might get even better in future. In 1960, the state established the first state-run school for girls, with colleges and universities being made subsequently. There is a remarkable rise in girl's literacy rate since then. Although the state still has a conspicuously discriminatory treatment towards women and their rights are sabotaged through layers of socio-political and economic policies, yet a silver lining exists in the form of increasing literacy rate and awareness of rights.

Wahhabism Supports Extremism

Benjamin mentions the historical origins of *Wahhabism* in the middle portion of the book. According to a 2006 report mentioned in the book, Islamic Studies textbooks in KSA inculcate that *"Christians, Jews, Shi'ites and Sufi Muslims are enemies of a true believer"* (p. 50). Radical *Wahhabi* ideology has seeped into a large proportion of extremists. After 1979, KSA used all their oil wealth to spread *Wahhabi* ideology and started sponsoring terrorism abroad. This move also redirected the uprising militant groups within the kingdom to fight external threats. KSA along with US played a significant role in the creation of Talibans, about which the author writes at length in the book. Moreover, there is a strong suspicion regarding KSA's clandestine role in facilitating the horrible 9/11 attacks. KSA's susceptibility to sponsor terrorism is also reflected in their ideological support for ISIS; with both entities sharing the common strands of Islam, the *Wahhabism*.

US-Saudi Connection

Despite the ideological, political and all kinds of other differences, there continues to be a strong bond between US and

Scanned by CamScanner

KSA. It all revolves around copious reserves of oil. Delving into the historical origins of this relationship, the author mentions that KSA was initially neutral in Second World War, but *"US government agreed to protect Saudi oil installations and King Saud approved a US request to construct airfields in the kingdom"* (p. 59). The two allies joined hands to curb *"godless communism"*, with US concerned about 'communism' and Saudis about 'godless'. The two countries got together again in the 1980s to fight Soviets in Afghanistan by using Pakistan as a proxy and creating Mujahedeen, who later became a perpetual menace for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Despite the post 9/11 anti KSA sentiment among the US public, relations between the two countries did not deteriorate, much as expected. According to a White House press release from 2014, *"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest US Foreign Military Sales customer, with active and open cases valued at approximately $97 billion"* (p. 63). US's soft corner for KSA and a blind indifference towards their dystopian regime is privy to no one.

References: Benjamin, Medea. *Kingdom of the unjust: behind the U.S.-Saudi connection*. New York: OR , 2016. Print. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

22

Who Owes Who: 50 Questions about World Debt

By Damien Millet and Eric Toussaint

About the Authors

Damien Millet is a mathematics teacher who lives in Orleans. He serves as the General Secretary of CADTM France (Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt).

Eric Toussaint is a historian and political scientist. He is the president of CADTM and author of several books that highlight the issue of debt for third world countries.

Overview

After rigorous research, Millet and Toussaint diagnose the problem of debt and its far reaching consequences for the third world countries. They undertook both historical and contemporary analyses to dissect the problems fully in a quest to seek remedies. Highlighting issues through meticulous statistics and graphs, the book provides solutions and gives compelling arguments in favor of cancellation of debts. *Who Owes Who* is a valuable piece of work for anyone interested in issues of third world that are arising from enormous amounts of external debts.

Scanned by CamScanner

Eight Takeaways

Third World: Poverty, Debts and Poor Leadership

The world is marked with a vivid division between the Global North (industrialized countries) and the countries which are developing (DCs). Among DCs, former soviet bloc and South is distinguished for historical reasons. According to the book, 86 per cent people live in developing countries or the third world and the *"...annual income of the richest 1 per cent of the world's population is equivalent to that of the poorest 57 per cent of the planet"* (Millet and Toussaint, p. 4). Living conditions of poorest populations are considerably deteriorating, with 2.8 billion people living on less than a dollar per day and 75 per cent of Aids deaths occurring in sub-Saharan region. Human development continues to remain stalled and debts (both internal and external) keep on rising. Leaders of developing countries have 'bowed' their population beneath external debts which have resulted in failure of any development.

"According to Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN, in 2000 debt-servicing took up an average of 38 per cent of the budgets of Sub-Saharan African countries." (p. 14)

Origins of Developing Countries' (DCs) Debt

There are multiple factors behind the origins of debt, with 'Eurodollars' and 'Petrodollars' being two of them. Leaders of Global South (developing countries) easily fell prey to Western powers after the Second World War when decolonization was at its last stages. North brought South under control by indebting it and easily overthrew all dissenting and anti-imperialist voices. Southern

Scanned by CamScanner

leaders – mostly dictators – borrowed large sums of money from North with huge commissions for themselves.

> Infrastructures imposed by the multinationals of the North, tied aid, arms purchases for massive repression, embezzlement and corruption – this is what the borrowed money has been used for, for decades. Today, populations are being milked dry to repay a debt which never even profited them. (p. 26)

Debt Crisis

After the Second World War, South became subordinated because colonial practices were not entirely abolished and Southern leaders had virtually no control over domestic growth. "*This subordination was made manifest in two main areas: unfair exchange and the downgrading of the terms of exchange. Both problems have subsisted until the present day, aggravated by the spiraling debt mechanism*" (p. 27). This changed temporarily in 1970s when there was oil crisis, in addition to "*reduced profitability of capital*" and US' balance of payment deficits. So, when growth in industrialized countries took a downward spiral, "*the banks began a frenzied campaign to incite Third World countries to take up offers of loans on easy terms. Real interest rates were very low because of high inflation*" (p. 27). Debt crisis rose again in 1981-82 when there was sudden rise in interest rates because of US' policies, eventually bringing about gigantic increase in the amounts to be paid by the Third World.

Management of Debt Crisis

When hit by crisis, DCs have no alternative other than to take more loan to pay previous ones. IMF is the main actor in such a

Scanned by CamScanner

management. A handful of examples are given in the book which allude how DCs continue to sink under enormous debt vis-à-vis Western powers. IMF and World Bank helped DCs to develop industries. Theoretically, this reduced the gap between North and South, but practically these projects did not enhance any industrial development; instead, they were designed to integrate DCs into global arena to serve the interests of multinationals of the North. To compensate for poor average income, DCs reduce prices, so that the marginalized factions could afford to buy things. *"The IMF and the World Bank demand that such subsidies be ended. The poorest sections of the population feel the effects immediately"* (p. 54). Statistics and historical information in the book reveal shocking details of the conditions of people living in third world countries, while simultaneously unveiling IMF's and World Bank's staggering indifference towards these wretchedly poor sections. Anatomy of debts is explained through graphs and numbers in a way that clearly indicates the disfavored position DCs find themselves in and how their condition is perpetually deteriorating.

Debt Reduction

There are only meagre reductions in debts and mostly deadlines are postponed. No substantial measures are taken to eradicate this menace for DCs. There are selective reductions for the strategic allies of US and other four powers (Japan, Germany, France and the United Kingdom). For the DCs, these measurements have not really cut the mustard. Strategic allies of US like Pakistan, Egypt, and Poland have benefited from these measurements only to comply with conditions set by the US. For Pakistan, it was Afghan

Scanned by CamScanner

war, for Poland, it was for the withdrawal from Warsaw Pact. Heavily indebted poor countries initiative (HIPC) – an initiative that is supposed to help poor, heavily indebted countries – did not really help either, as it covered a very small portion of poor countries (42 out of 165 DCs).

> First, the aim is not to free up development for the HIPCs, but merely to render their debts sustainable. The difference is huge. The idea is to cancel just enough to keep the DCs paying to the maximum of their capabilities. (p. 96)

Debt Cancellation in the Past

Historically, there are numerous examples which show how debt cancellations have not resulted in any economic disadvantage. In 1776, US declared null and void all debts that were due to London. This was called debt repudiation, and it is explained at length in the book. Newly established USSR in 1918 decided not to take burden of loans of Tsarist Russia. Cuba did not pay colonial debt to Spain once it became protractor of US. In recent times, such an action would result in IMF's and World Bank's banishment on international arena and subsequent destabilization under US' impetus. This happened to Peru in 1985 and there is plethora of other examples.

Case of Cancelling DCs' Debt

If we go by the legal argument, repayment is mandatory. But if we see the moral side of it, repaying debts would result in massive inflation in DCs. People would not have access to basic needs such as food, water, clothes and shelter. If we weigh the pros

Scanned by CamScanner

and cons, then surely repaying debts does not take priority over leaving 5 billion people in crippling poverty.

> It is immoral to demand of the DCs that they devote their meagre resources to repaying well-heeled creditors (whether in the North or the South) rather than to the satisfaction of these fundamental needs. (p. 118)

Heavy debts drastically affect domestic policies of DCs. Leaders can no longer freely implement policies they were elected for. An overall comparison between North and South's debt reveal staggering discrepancy, and cancellation would not affect the global finance. Millet and Toussaint have provided compelling arguments in favor of cancellation. There are several solutions to this problem if North is willing to consider. If we consider fair repayment, then, as per statistical analysis, DCs have paid more than they owed. For every $1 owed since 1980s, DCs have repaid $7.5 and they still have to pay $4 more. Through subtle manipulation, and highly self-serving policies and rules, North's agenda is to keep DCs in a perpetual turmoil as far as economic progress is concerned. Legally, through international law, heavily indebted countries can take plea of *force majeure*, law by which countries which cannot fulfill their international obligations (including repayment of debt) because of external circumstances can seek revocation.

International Campaign for Debt Cancellation

Although the issue is not new, but campaigns against external debts is a recent phenomenon. There are a lot of campaigns going on in third world countries – the biggest one managed to collect 24 million signatures from all over the DCs.

Scanned by CamScanner

> In the North, certain organizations pioneered the campaign, such as the Association Internationale Des Techniciens, Experts Et Chercheurs (AITEC) (International Association of Technicians, Experts and Researchers) in Paris, which first broached the subject in 1983, or the CADTM in Belgium from 1990 onwards. Several books by Susan George1 had considerable influence in reinforcing the movement in its early stages. (p. 164)

These movements believe that cancellation should be unconditional. Neo-liberal corporate policies made people realize about the subordination of South and menace of these debts. Since then, people are becoming more and more aware of this issue. Campaigns, debates, considerable literature and movements are continuously fighting against external debt which is by and large the biggest hindrance in development of poor countries.

References: Millet, Damien, and Eric Toussaint. *Who Owes Who: 50 Questions about World Debt*. London: Zed , 2013. Print.

Scanned by CamScanner

23

Islamic Leviathan: Islam and the Making of State Power

By Hossein Nasr

About the Author

Hossein Nasr, currently a Professor Emeritus at the George Washington University, is a highly revered and influential Iranian scholar. He studied physics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and obtained a Master's degree in geology and geophysics at Harvard University. He then went on to pursue his PhD in history of science and learning from the same university. As an academic, he has taught at Tehran University, Arya Mehr University, University of Edinburgh, Temple University and George Washington University. He has authored over fifty books some of which include *The Heart of Islam*, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, *Islam in the Modern World* and *Islamic Leviathan*.

Overview

Integration of religious identity into state ideology has been a norm for the likes of, among many others, Pakistan and Malaysia.

Scanned by CamScanner

This book unravels the path of critical transformation of the said countries from secular post-colonial states to agents of Islamization. Delineating the role of state "*in embedding Islam in politics*", it distinctly shows how it was done so only to "*serve their [state's] own interests*" and to expand its power. The thorough historical analysis provides apt answers to queries related to the rationale, time, mechanism and consequences of "*state interests becoming anchored in Islamization*".

Four Takeaways

The Origin of Pakistan and Malaysia

Malaysia and Pakistan are products of British colonialism. These societies have been entrenched in the colonial setup to such a degree that even today "*their societies reflect the deep impact of colonialism*" (Nasr , p. 31). That is precisely because imperialism never actually ceased to exist; it "*was merely supplanted [by those] who controlled the levers of power*" (p. 48). Both states were "*born weak*", both underwent the initial "*successes and failures of state leaders*" and both saw the state becoming theological. The way the leaders in both the countries "*engaged religion and culture to achieve their goal of change set the stage for the more concerted use of Islam to serve state power from the 1980s on*" (p. 51).

In both states, inevitability of embracing Islamic ideology in politics was observed shortly. In case of Malaysia, the state took Islam as a "*useful instrument for promoting social cohesion, discipline, solidarity, and national unity*"[2]. Similarly, in Pakistan too, the state leaders swiftly "*succumbed to the temptation of*

Scanned by CamScanner

mobilizing Islamic symbolisms in the service of state formation" (p. 60). Thus, the era commencing from independence till 1969 was a *"time of adjustment"*, which *"eroded secularism in Pakistan"* (p. 65) and rendered both states weak.

Secularism in Crisis

Drastic changes in the post-1969 era created new crisis for both Malaysia and Pakistan; the *"secular state began to decline"* and a *"greater Islamic consciousness in the political arena"* (p. 69) started to emerge. It was also in consequence of waning state authority and power. For Malaysia, the NEP (National Economic Policy) — employed in 1971 — had failed, resulting in an *"increase in Islamist activism"* (p. 74). For Pakistan, even the strongest regime of Ayub Khan *"was unable to contain the rising tide of... Islamist demand for an end to secularism"* (p. 74). The end of Bhutto-era amplified the crisis for secularism further with *"no ideological tools available to the state through which to protect its position"*, while *"state leaders began to look to Islam itself as a panacea"* (p. 81).

The *"period of ideological tumult"*

The author calls the post-1970s era *"a period of ideological tumult"*. In both Malaysia and Pakistan, there was *"greater Islamic resurgence across society and in politics that was evident in greater adherence to Islamic norms in private and public lives"* (p. 82). In Malaysia, Islamic resurgence had already started its course after the riots in 1969. Most prominently, the *"Dakwah"* movement— aimed at making students *"more vigilant of their faith"* and *"to do social work"*— started to evolve. Movements

Scanned by CamScanner

associated with it were bent upon augmenting "*student Islamic activism*" (p. 83-84). This was further propounded by global factors: Arab's influence, ties with the Middle East and the Iranian Revolution of 1979. In Pakistan, situation was equally alarming for secularism. The Jama'at-i-Islami and Islami Jam'iat-i-Tulabah, two "*principal Islamist actors*", pressed for "*restructuring of society and politics and the establishment of a state that would embody the spirit of Islamic law*" (p. 93). This was to such an extent that the "*actors*" would go on to have an "*open confrontation with the government over the role of religion in politics*" (p. 94).

Islamisation Redefining the Course of Both Nations

Although the objectives remained consistent, there was a fundamental difference between Malaysia and Pakistan in terms of Islamisation. According to the author, "*State-led Islamization in Malaysia was far more moderate in tone than it was in Pakistan*" (p. 131). This variation can be credited to the fact that Pakistan relied more on military; the priority for Pakistan was restoring state authority. Also the Islamist forces in this part of the world were "*more radical*". Combining all these factors, it was likely that "*Pakistan would produce far more thoroughgoing and ideologically strident Islamization*" *(p. 131)*. Even the "*decade of democracy*", following Zia's death in 1988, kept the Islamisation legacy alive, albeit weakened.

Contrarily, Malaysia encountered an era of "*great political stability*" from 1981 to 1997. It managed '*Islamism*' eloquently and curbed extremism, and "*the state set out to draw clear boundaries for Islamic activism and social institutions*" (p. 117).

Scanned by CamScanner

None the less, the era of Islamisation, having lasted for almost two decades for both Malaysia and Pakistan, "*deeply influenced the working of the state*" (p. 158). The author describes, "*It affected the scope of state powers, policy making, and reach into society. Islamization redefined state-society relations, and changed the balance of power between the two.*" (p. 158). Be that as it may, it was "*not so much about Islam as it was about the state*" (p. 159).

Reference: Nasr, S. V. R. (2001). *Islamic leviathan: Islam and the making of state power*. Oxford University Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

24

The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis

By Patrick Kingsley

About the Author

An award-winning journalist, Patrick Kingsley has reported from over two dozen countries. He was Guardian's foreign affairs reporter and worked for the organisation for seven years, most prominently as the Middle-East correspondent. He is currently working as a foreign correspondent for New York Times where he also works on special reporting projects.

Overview

As the world witnesses the largest surge of mass migration since the Second World War, Kingsley recalls the poem of a young, prolific British poet of Kenyan origin—Warsan Shire.

"...no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land."

(From 'Home' by Warsan Shire)

Fearing loss of life, people in the Middle East and several countries in Africa and South Asia are left with no other option but

Scanned by CamScanner

to flee their war-torn hometowns. In search of a better place, they set out on a journey that is as horrifying as living in *"their collapsed homelands"*. They push the limits of risking life and take on the ordeal of crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach the European shores. Such large-scale display of risk-taking behavior speaks volumes about the *"civil wars in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq and repression and poverty in Africa"*, which pushed *"an unprecedented number of people towards Europe"*.

This book is a sorry tale; it uncovers the agonizing odyssey of the voyagers and of those who helped them along their way. It also uplifts the veil of indifference cast upon politicians, who choose to look *"the other way"*. The book is also a powerful *"critique of Europe's handling of the migration crisis"*.

Seven Takeaways

The Journey Begins

As a *"wave of antiauthoritarian protests erupted across the Arab world in late 2010 and early 2011, rippling through Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain and Yemen"* (Kingsley, p. 19), Syria too got engulfed by the demonstrations soon enough. The conflict took the form of a civil war which eventually turned into a disastrous sectarian rift. For an ordinary Syrian, there were several forces at play. On the one hand, there was the dictatorial regime whose cruelty knew no boundaries and on the other hand, there were terrorists from multiple outlets seeking to take control of the towns. Flee or get killed were the only two choices people had. Those who managed to escape started their journey to Europe, only to find that to expect sufferings to end there was absurd.

Scanned by CamScanner

Refugee Crisis is not caused by the People-Smuggling Network

As the civil wars escalate, human smuggling network thrives. This "*people-smuggling industry*" wakes up amidst the time migrants realize that sea has become "*realist's choice*" (p. 43). Still, contrary to the popular notion in Europe, which revolves around blaming the smugglers for the migration crisis, "*the vast majority depart of their own accord*" (p. 45). As people from Western Africa, Egypt and Syria reach Libya, they are "*packed like sardines into the back of the truck*" (p. 29). Some of them might die of dehydration or other reasons but they hardly become targets of bandits and sandstorms. Once the over-boarded boats depart the Libyan coast, migrants wait until they reach international waters. Meanwhile, many in the Europe put forth the argument: "*the boat people want to leech off our generous benefits system*" (p. 30).

The Perils of Journey through Mediterranean

The part of journey that is supposed to end in Italian jurisdiction is death-defying. Over 900 people died in April, 2015 in what is dubbed as the "*worst modern shipwreck*" (p. 67). Reaching the Italian waters remains an unfulfilled dream for many. Those who luckily survive after having changed dozens of boats filled with people vomiting across each other are saved by the Italian coastguard.

From Italy Onwards

It may seem, after quite a tormenting trip at sea, that hard bit has come to an end. But only to their dismay, the voyagers face greater troubles ahead, most notably the police. Even if that is

Scanned by CamScanner

handled, they have a number of routes to decide to travel through, while having almost no money with them.

The Balkan Route

Just like Syrians, Afghanis also undergo the dangerous odyssey to Europe. Escaping from the Talibans and ISIS, they come a long way before reaching western Turkish coast; the journey to Greece begins from there. Having reached the Greek Islands, migrants embark upon another tiring journey towards Macedonia and finally Serbia. The problems encountered at the Greek-Macedonian border are even greater, with kidnappings and refugee logjams being too frequent. Still the voyagers go on, at times even on foot. Although *"no one's completely sure"* where to go, *"they know they need to get eventually to the field that's written about on Facebook"* (p. 113).

Europe's Indifference towards the Plight of Migrants

The sufferings of the migrants became known to the world only recently. Events such as the discovery of 71 dead refugees and the death of Aylan Kurdi— the young Syrian boy who was found dead on the shores of Turkey—led to a sudden increase in the media coverage. As *"the public sympathy for migrants rose... migration crisis (was) therefore redefined in liberal circles as a refugee crisis"* (p. 134). But despite enormous pressure from the international community and progressives, *"more and more countries erected fences along their borders"* (p. 12). European governments' response to the crisis, thus, added insult to injury. The authorities have yet to realize that the refugees have no other option; they would continue to migrate even if they are not welcomed.

Scanned by CamScanner

Resolving the Crisis

As a "*least-worst*" solution, the author writes, "*The only sane, logical and long-term response to the crisis is to create a legal mechanism for vast numbers of refugees to reach Europe in safety*" (p. 148). Instead of barring refugees from entering the European countries, it would be a more realistic approach to "*manage their arrival in a more organized manner*" (p. 149). Still the crisis cannot be deemed to end unless the situation in Syria gets stable. The author also emphasises on the role that wealthy Gulf and Western countries need to play.

Reference: Kingsley, P. (2016). *The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis*. Guardian Faber Publishing. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

25

The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces That Will Shape Our Future

By Kevin Kelly

About the Author

Being the founder of Wired Magazine, one of the world's leading tech magazines, Kevin Kelly has been documenting the sometimes steady and not-so-steady rise and development of technology for some 25 years. He is a photographer and a big believer in environmental conservation. Currently, he is serving on the board of Long Now Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to encouraging long-term thinking instead of short-term horizons most organisations choose to embrace. He has authored some of the most acclaimed works on changing technological landscape including *What Technology Wants*, *Cool Tools* and *Out of Control*. The chosen book, *The Inevitable*, reached the New York Times bestseller list in 2016.

Overview

While the vision of a future governed by robots, self-driving cars, intelligent washing machines and an utter lack of

Scanned by CamScanner

privacy may be deemed too dark by some. Kelly seems to think otherwise. Technological change is inevitable; it is already happening and will continue to happen whether we like it or not. In this book, Kelly points out the reasons for this change and their effect on the 12 technological forces he seems to think govern human life. Kelly's 12 technological forces, that he has named using slightly unconventional terms, are *becoming, cognifying, flowing, screening, accessing, sharing, filtering, remixing, interacting, tracking, questioning* and *beginning*. Each chapter elaborates on each force and its relationship with the growing consumer-driven technological change. While this book may be a beacon of hope for disenchanted millennials, it may bore some, especially those among us who tend to be more skeptical than others. That is primarily because Kelly presents the future as an entirely optimistic venture where technological advancements such as AI (artificial intelligence) are not a threat to human survival, but an imperative need.

Twelve Takeaways

Becoming

Kelly states that everything is constantly being upgraded and made better than it was when it was conceived; and this will continue to happen.

> There is no happy flying-car future beckoning us any longer. Unlike the last century, nobody wants to move to the distant future. Many dread it. That makes it hard to take the future seriously. So we're stuck in the short now, a present without a generational perspective. (Kelly, p. 18)

Scanned by CamScanner

In the future, the rate of change would be even higher and we will never truly be able to master anything in its entirety due to the continual change. [...] The other alternative is to embrace the future and its becoming. The future we are aimed at is the product of a processs — a becoming—that we can see right now. We can embrace the current emerging shifts that will become the future" (p. 18). The term he uses to describe our future counterparts is "newbies".

Cognifying

Unlike many of us, Kelly does not imagine the future to be a Matrix-esque reality. He states, *"[...] if AI can help humans become better chess players, it stands to reason that it can help us become better pilots, better doctors, better judges, better teachers"* (p. 39). He also points out that we have been using AI for a long time without realizing it.

> We already have artificial intelligence in many of our machines; we just don't call it that. Google's translation AI turns a phone into a personal translator. Speak English into the microphone and it immediately repeats what you said in understandable Chinese, or Russian, or Arabic, or dozens of other languages. (p. 46)

According to him, sooner or later AI will be as necessary to us as electricity and will be as readily available too. It will change the way we think and interact with one another – and while there may be some repercussions to it, life without AI will not be possible.

Flowing

From one end of the world to the other, data flows in a steady stream to us. This, as Kelly calls it, is because the internet is

Scanned by CamScanner

god's photocopier. Everything you see has been copied and transferred to you from one source or the other. This is the future of all communication: streaming takes precedence over everything.

Screening

Kelly predicts that in the future, the entire world's literature, interaction, goods and services, almost everything will be done through screens.

> Screens are always on; we never stop staring at them, unlike with books. This new platform is very visual and it gradually merges words with moving images. On the screen words zip around and float over images, serving as footnotes or annotations, linking to other words or images. (p. 78)

We already spend most of our day staring at screens; Kelly takes this to the next level. He says that the need for physical presence will be reduced to none. The main point of this chapter is that due to screens, books will become obsolete. *"The tension between the book and the screen is still being played out. [...]But eventually the text of ebooks will be liberated in the near future, and the true nature of books will blossom"* (p. 80). This, as is with all technology, will rewire and change the way we think, about ourselves, our society and personal identities; everything will be reduced to screens.

Accessing

"Access is also a way to deliver new things in close to real time. Unless something runs in real time, it does not count" (p. 97). Much like books, ownership will become an obsolete concept. Kelly asserts that everything is being dematerialized. Products become services and services will become necessities. *"Possession is not as*

Scanned by CamScanner

important as it once was. Accessing is more important than ever" (p. 93). One can see this happening in Pakistan as well. For example, with the presence of apps like Uber and Careem, the need to own cars is not as pressing as it used to be. Why cook when you can order food from Foodpanda and EatOye? Why own anything at all when you can access it by the mere tap of a screen?

> Our appetite for the instant is insatiable. The cost of real-time engagement requires massive coordination and degrees of collaboration that were unthinkable a few years ago. Now that most people are equipped with a supercomputer in their pocket, entirely new economic forces are being unleashed.[...] If smartly connected, accessing is the default (p. 99).

Technological advancements will reach such new heights that the need to own things will not be a need at all. This will also open up new avenues for economic development, not, however, in the physical realm, but in the technological haven.

Sharing

The internet is an unfathomably gigantic public space where ideas, media, images, consumer goods and services are constantly being created and shared. People share their lives on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and innumerable other avenues. Nothing is private; everything is everyone's property and no one's property simultaneously. The amount of content being uploaded on YouTube, Facebook and other networking websites indicates the magnitude of time and skills people are giving away for free; whether for worse or for better is yet to be determined. In the future, the data that is being shared now will be considered next to nothing, as sharing itself will intensify to the maximum.

Scanned by CamScanner

Filtering

The vastness of the Library of Everything quickly overwhelms the very narrow ruts of our own consuming habits. [...] Someone, or something, has to choose, or whisper in our ear to help us decide (p. 138). In an economy driven by content preferences, our attention is the only thing worth capitalizing on. According to Kelly, in the future, though we will have everything in the conceivable world at our fingertips, we would not have enough time to actually go through anything. So, layers upon layers of filters will be added to literature, to TV shows, to essentially everything. *"We are still at the early stages in how and what we filter. [...] In the next 30 years the entire cloud will be filtered, elevating the degree of personalization"* (p. 145).

Remixing

> Immersive environments and virtual realities in the future will inevitably be able to scroll back to earlier states. In fact, anything digital will have undo and rewindability as well as remixing. Going forward, we are likely to get impatient with experiences that don't have undo buttons, such as eating a meal (p. 169).

With the abundance of data floating around in the digital space, everything in the future will be recombined, redone, re-recorded and remixed. Older things will be deconstructed, added with more complexities and layers and then reproduced. Originality will become a fleeting thought. However, remixing will not be limited to entertainment only; it will be added to goods and services opening up newer avenues for economic development.

Scanned by CamScanner

Interacting

In the new world, we will interact with people through virtual and augmented realities. This venture is exciting and not at all creepy for Kelly, because this way people with disabilities will get to experience things they had never experienced before. Through our devices, we will find more immersive worlds; and through these worlds, we will find stronger ways to connect and interact with one another. Physical presences will be replaced entirely by digital ones.

Tracking

While the aspect of one's entire life being recorded may seem damning to many of us, Kelly does not seem too scared by the possibility. According to him, everything will be recorded and kept track of, and people will have the ability (through technological advancements) to recall every instance of their life. Even though this will have many social, cultural and anthropological consequences, the prospect of recording and tracking everything for a better and more manageable life is nothing less than exciting for Kelly.

Questioning

> Supposed impossibilities keep happening with increased frequency. [...] Everyone knew humans were innately private beings, yet the impossibility of total open round-the-clock sharing still occurred. [...] Like Wikipedia, YouTube is theoretically impossible. But here again this impossibility is real in practice. (p. 221)

We live in a hyper-connected world where improbable things becoming reality is the new norm. For example, a few years

Scanned by CamScanner

ago, it would have been impossible to think that we would share minute details of our lives with absolute strangers; but now we do it for nothing less than validation. Kelly says that in the future, our connectivity will increase a trillion-fold and so will the improbability. However, with improbability brilliant solutions and more technological advancements will also come.

Beginning

> Thousands of years from now, when historians review the past, our ancient time here at the beginning of the third millennium will be seen as an amazing moment. This is the time when inhabitants of this planet first linked themselves together into one very large thing. Later the very large thing would become even larger, but you and I are alive at that moment when it first awoke. Future people will envy us, wishing they could have witnessed the birth we saw. (p. 236)

This is only the beginning. There are still parts of the earth that are off the grid, that are unwired. However, in 30 years, we will all be connected to one another on a planetary scale, plugged into the matrix: a conglomerate, an amalgam of internet devices – we will all be one. It will only continue to grow and get bigger and bigger until it reaches unpredictable intensity and power.

Reference: Kelly, K. (2016) *The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces That Will Shape Our Future.* Viking Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

26

America's Addiction to Terrorism

Henry A. Giroux

About the author

Being a renowned theorist of critical pedagogy, Henry Giroux provides an explicit analysis of the worsening human conditions at the hands of vicious modern-day capitalism. He has held prestigious positions at various institutes such as Boston University, Miami University, and Pennsylvania State University. With a vast variety of works published, he has won numerable scholarly awards.

Overview

The world is entrenched with all the malaises there could ever have been. Terrorism is one such appalling ailment. Time and again, it has been censured in this book, while the author talks about the forms it has taken. In Giroux's view, *"Terrorism is as American as apple pie"*. It has been prevalent in the American culture in the shape of countless revelations: legally sanctioned torture, militarized police forces and corrupted education system, to name a

Scanned by CamScanner

few. Additionally, terrorism manifested itself into a wholesome American phenomenon once the US' fury was unleashed upon the world in response to the 9/11 attacks. Not surprisingly, racism, violence, torture and austerity politics, then, became the very basis of the policies, with neoliberal capitalism acting as the driving force. Eradication of such horrific apprehensions lies in the formation of a 'broad alliance' to denunciate neoliberal capitalism.

Six Takeaways

Neoliberal Capitalism Instigating America's Obsession with Terrorism and Torture

Public spheres have been aptly replaced by private spaces and corporate settings which operate only at the behest of towering profit margins. It is for this purpose that Giroux proclaims: "Free-market policies, values and practices... now shape practically every commanding political and economic institution" (Giroux, p. 16).

Such replacement has taken away the charm of public sphere which duly keeps the forces of *"militarization, violence, and state terrorism"* (p. 17) in check. Resultantly, it leads to implementation of monstrous policies. Neoliberalism, rightly called a savage form of 'free-market fundamentalism', thus for US, has paved the pathway to terrorism. Likewise, abolishing any notion of common good, neoliberalism is *"liberalism untempered by a sense of social responsibility"* (p. 18). Such an era, Giroux claims, *"...is one in which acts of violence and moral depravity were not only embraced but celebrated"* (p. 47).

Neoliberalism Leading to a Democracy in Crisis

Criticizing the new authoritarian class, formed under the regime of neoliberalism, Giroux maintains, *"They are the new gated*

Scanned by CamScanner

class who float above the national boundaries, laws, regulation, and oversight, with a task to transform all nation-states into instruments to enrich their wealth and power" (p. 19).

Building public trust in democracy becomes challenging once the state is taken over by financial institutions. The trust on state starts waning and, in a systematic manner, people are made to trust the market, giving corporations a kind of unregulated power. Such a rule of 'corporate capitalism', then, wreaks havoc on poor people, heavily indebted youth and black and brown citizens. In the meantime, politics become influenced due to massive inflow of funds for campaigns by financial elites.

Militarization of Police Forces and the Eventual Racist Brutality

After the September 11 attacks, militarization of police forces has increased by leaps and bounds, the effects of which have been different on different classes and races. The targets of police brutality and mass incarcerations have mostly been the black and brown youth, with the financial elites being successful in getting away from such targetting. In order for the police to carry out such activities, Giroux states that *"Racist brutality in the United States is abetted and legitimated through a discourse of demonization, stereotypes, and objectification"* (p. 125).

Evidently, such brutality is not limited to militarization of police forces, but encompasses various other cruelties in relation to women's reproductive rights, voting rights of poor minorities, domestic violence, gun ownership, attacks on immigrants and war against critical thinking.

Scanned by CamScanner

Degradation of Higher Education

Observing the fact that capitalist class is threatened by quality education, Giroux laments, *"This role of higher education is perceived by neoliberal acolytes as dangerous because it has the potential to educate young people to think critically and learn how to hold power accountable"* (p. 27).

Higher education has transformed into a machine manufacturing elite class of managers with 'corporate mentality'. It has abandoned processing the critical thoughts, depriving students from the forms of knowledge that challenge the status quo. Hence, students being treated as commodities shy away from basic democratic values. As a result, Giroux comments, *"Education under neoliberalism kills the social imagination and any hope for a world that is more just, equal, and democratic"* (p. 28)

Austerity Politics Damaging the Social Contract between People and Government

Austerity leads to authoritarian capitalism, damaging the social contract between people and their government. Furthermore, it individualizes social issues and *"goes hand-in-hand with ideologies, policies and practices that depoliticize large portions of the population" (p. 102).* Such policies, resultantly, restrain freedom and choices and deplore faith in democracy. Eventually, *"The passion for public values"* gives way to the *"ruthless quest for profits and the elevation of self-interest over the common good"* (p. 101).

Reinforcement of Social Movements *"...With the Spirit of Collective Resistance and the Promise of Radical Democracy."*

Denouncing neoliberal capitalism in all of its forms, Giroux emphasizes the need to form powerful social movements for

Scanned by CamScanner

overcoming the reign of terror. Movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' have been applauded in the book. Such movements, in Giroux's view, are sure to bring radical democracy. The spirit of critical thinking and collective resistance implies that there exists a dire need *"...to rethink the possibilities of democracy without capitalism, and to organize for both short-term gains and long-term fundamental changes"* (p. 248)

Reference: Giroux, H. A. (2015). *America's Addiction to Terrorism*. NYU Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

27

Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan's Religious Minorities

By Farahnaz Ispahani

About the Author

As a highbrow individual in the field of politics, Farahnaz Ispahani utilizes her vast experience to analyze the political conditions of Pakistan. Her contributions to the field of journalism are incessant. She has served as the Member of National Assembly of Pakistan and the member of standing committees on various forums, especially on foreign affairs. Having been the irrepressible voice for minorities, she was deservingly listed among Foreign Policy magazine's Top 100 Global Thinkers in 2012. She has also been a Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center (2013-14).

Overview

The world is increasingly becoming a place marred with bigotry and religious intolerance. As a result, minorities—throughout the world—face a ceaseless threat to their life. The fate

Scanned by CamScanner

of Pakistani minorities has been no different. This book provides a gloomy yet clear picture of the state of affairs of Pakistan's minorities and the oppression they have been experiencing as a result of 'Islamist' policies. It highlights the change in course the country underwent from Jinnah's *"equal citizens of one state"* to the partisan rhetoric of *"the land of the pure"*— rendering minorities impure. From the time the Objectives Resolution 1949 was laid down, Jinnah's vision of 'religious pluralism' started being tarnished. Elevating the rhetoric of the 'land of the pure', the Zia regime struck last nail in the coffin of 'religious pluralism'.

Four Takeaways

The Transition of Pakistan from a Secular to an Ideological State

The term 'theocracy' was unknown to the esteemed person who founded Pakistan. He termed Pakistan as a state which would safeguard the rights of minorities. Concurrently, he appointed a handful of non-Muslims as high government officials. The debate over the role of religion in the state started only once the successors of Jinnah took over. The factions of bureaucracy, military and the political and religious leadership worked closely to stall the "*non-confessional future*" of Pakistan. Over the years, the state apparatus got overwhelmed with religiosity, with a large number of political leaders using religion in one way or the other. Appositely, the author writes: *"The country was plunged into a power struggle pitting regional politicians against either bureaucrats or generals with each side invoking religion to enhance its standing and credibility"* (Ispahani, p. 42).

Scanned by CamScanner

Meanwhile, the religious minority, living *'through the toleration of majority'*, was refused protection under the statutes of law. Consequently, disastrous incidents—such as the killing of more than two thousand Ahmadis in 1953 and death of seventy three Christians in 2016 in suicide bombing—became frequent. Thus, minorities such as Hindus, Sikhs and Christians face a never-ending threat of being attacked by religious fanatics.

The Incremental Islamization Disparaging Minorities

Pakistan's history is full of successive periods that marked *"the promotion of religious intolerance"*. Each period paved way for the other by providing *"harsher interpretation of Islamic Law"*. The Islamic orthodoxy, thus, demarcated the national identity, smearing all attempts of secularization. Moreover, the state *"used religious symbolism to bolster the nation's morale"* (p. 67) in times of war or during election campaigns. Quoting the example of brutality committed by the military and political leaders in Bengal in 1971 and other instances of injustice towards minorities at various occasions, Ispahani argues, *"Pakistan's leaders persisted in nation building through religion, rather than embracing inclusive civic nationalism"* (p. 78).

The Era of Islamization under Zia-Ul-Haq Worsened the Conditions for Minorities

Zia, considering himself the *"soldier of Islam"*, forced Islamization based on primitive interpretations of the religion, causing worries for *"secular Pakistanis as well as non-Muslim minorities"* (p. 95). The policies devised by the Zia regime not only

Scanned by CamScanner

affected the state institutions but everything concerning the citizens of Pakistan. Ispahani, thus, notes, *"However ridiculous most of Zia's Islamization efforts appeared to outside observers, they significantly altered the daily lives of Pakistanis"* (p. 96). While these polices backed by constitutional amendments impacted the whole civil society, it were the minorities that got affected the most, including Shia, Ahmedi, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Zoroastrian and Christian communities.

The matters did not end with the end of the Zia regime, as the religious intolerance brewed at that time did not fade away at all. In both of the democratic periods that followed, *"Islamist clerics went about their usual business of trying to cleanse Pakistan of its non- Muslims"* (p. 137). Willingly or unwillingly, political parties relied on Islamist factions to gain public support. Their influence grew even further over the years as a result of the state's role in support of Afghani *mujahedeen*.

Why the Government Failed to Curb Religious Extremism?

The period of General Musharraf's rule, marked with *"enlightened moderation"*, saw multiple attempts of eradicating extremism from Pakistan. But none of these attempts brought any fruitful results; the killings of Ahmedis and the forced conversions of Hindus did not cease to happen. *"The reason why Musharraf's promise of reining in religious extremism went unfulfilled lies in his support for jihad as an instrument of Pakistan's foreign policy"* (p. 165). Terrorism cannot be eradicated when the state kills one set of extremists (who are against the state) and joins hands with the other set which serves as a tool to threaten India. Despite the military

Scanned by CamScanner

dictatorship being over and the civilian rule being reinstated, Pakistan's security woes vis-à-vis minorities do not seem to diminish. The Shi'a community continues to be targeted, especially in Hazara, and the frequency of blasphemy allegations has reached new heights, rendering minorities helpless.

Reference: Ispahani, F. (2017). *Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan's Religious Minorities*. Oxford University Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

28

Planet of Slums

By Mike Davis

About the Author

Mike Davis is a sociologist, urban theorist, and a historian. His contributions towards sociology and urban theory have won him several awards including The MacArthur Fellowship and the Lannan Literary Award for Nonfiction. He has also conducted in depth studies and analyses about the relationship between power and social class. Some of his works include *Magical Urbanism*, *Ecology of Fear* and *Planet of Slums*.

Overview

As the name suggests, the book basically talks about how planet earth is slowly turning into one giant slum. Presenting a blistering critique of neoliberal capitalist policies and their role in changing the urban landscape for the worst, Davis states that more and more people are now migrating to urban areas in search of a better life. However, once they follow through, they are forced to live in slums and have no choice but to take multiple jobs to make

Scanned by CamScanner

ends meet which include child labor, child prostitution and a myriad of other forms of exploitation. Davis also argues that contrary to what capitalists would like us to believe, slums are not the way to a better economy – they only create a bigger class divide between the poor and those who hold the means of production. He asserts that institutions like the IMF who aim to solve this crisis are only making it worse, as they are as much a part of the capitalist machinery as those who exploit the people living in slums. One gruesome reality Davis sheds light on in the book is that by the year 2050, 95% of the earth's population will inhabit cities, due to overpopulation (10 billion by 2050), urban sprawl and scarcity of resources.

Davis's book is essentially a warning, presenting to us a world which is no different from the industrial era London, where human life was only worthwhile as long as it was productive.

Four Takeaways

Cities as the Last Resort

Being an urban sociologist, Davis is well-versed with how industrial urbanization is changing the landscapes of cities. He predicts, rather ruefully, that by the year 2050, humanity will have reached its peak population and will only be residing in cities. The author mentions how over the period of time, there has been drastic increase in the number of cities and, subsequently, the urban population. He further suggests that countryside population will begin to decrease after 2020, and *"as a result, cities will account for virtually all future world population growth, which is expected to peak at about 10 billion in 2050"* (Davis, p. 2). The countryside will

Scanned by CamScanner

become obsolete because of urban sprawl and non-concentric spread of the population. This, he says, will be a watershed moment in the history of mankind, leading to the birth of a new era which will not be as pleasant as one would like to think.

Slums are Thriving

Davis points out that no matter where in the world one is situated, slums are pretty much identical. They all possess the same informal economic structure in which the dwellers rely on heinous, unconventional jobs to make ends meet. They all run on exploitation of one kind or the other – take the example of the Water Tanker Mafia in Karachi's slums. Yet, they are thriving. Davis's rhetorical abilities lead one to unequivocally believe that the power to exploit this kind of relocation – social and economic – lies in the hands of the government and a few powerful institutions – the IMF and World Bank. *"Policies of agricultural deregulation and financial discipline enforced by the IMF and World Bank continued to generate an exodus of surplus rural labor to urban slums even as cities ceased to be job machines"* (p. 15).

Sanitation: A Damning Crisis

Davis brings to light the plight and sufferings that come with being someone who lives in a slum or slum-like conditions. Sanitation is one of the many such issues. The author gives the example of Mexico City, where the living conditions for the poor are absolutely gut-wrenching. *"Examples of poor people's powerlessness in the face of the sanitation crisis are legion. Mexico City residents, for example, inhale shit: fecal dust blowing off Lake Texcoco during the hot, dry season causes typhoid and hepatitis"*

Scanned by CamScanner

(p. 143). Another example is that of the abysmal conditions of people who live in 'New Fields around Rangoon'. "Monique Skidmore describes families living in the sanitary equivalent of the mud hell of World War I trench warfare: they cook and defecate in the mud directly in front of the tiny plastic sheets under which they sleep" (p. 144). He also laments the state of affairs of slum-dwellers of third world countries such as India, Pakistan and Iran.

Davis argues that due to lack of population control and rural to urban migration, slums are growing at an alarming rate. In the absence of governmental and international standards for slum-living, standards of living in slums vary from zero to none. Sanitation, or lack thereof, is one of the many issues haunting slum-dwellers.

Rural Areas As Troubled as Urban Slums

While slums in urban areas are riddled with unemployment, lack of sanitation, excess of diseases, starvation and hunger, the situation in rural areas is no less alarming. This is primarily because of the decreased governmental spending on providing utilities to the rural dwellers. Davis cites Praful Bidwai's article published in *Asian Times* to uncover the dilapidated state of affairs of people living in rural areas of India's various states.

> Infant mortality rates are rising even in states like Kerala and Maharashtra, which have relatively good social indicators . . . . The government is cutting spending on rural development, including agricultural programs, and rural employment and anti-poverty schemes, as well as on health, drinking water supply,

Scanned by CamScanner

education and sanitation. Income growth in the rural areas, where 70 percent of Indians live, averaged 3.1 in the 1980s. It has sharply declined to 1.8 percent. Real wages of rural workers decreased last year by more than 2 percent. (p. 171)

Reference Davis, M. (2006). *Planet of Slums*. Verso

Scanned by CamScanner

20

The Age of Jihad: Islamic State and the Great War for the Middle East

By Patrick Cockburn

About the Author

Having served as a dedicated and valiant journalist, Patrick Cockburn has earned himself innumerable awards and titles. The Irish journalist has covered almost all the critical areas in the Middle East and has gone through drastic periods of civil and military wars. Some of his most influential works include *Chaos and Caliphate*, *The Rise of Islamic State* and *The Age of Jihad*. Currently, he is working for The Independent as a correspondent for the Middle East.

Overview

History reeks with the malaise of deadly conflicts. Although such periods have come to pass, but certain regions of the planet are still submerged in crises. Cockburn writes, *"It is between the Iranian border and the Mediterranean that these conflicts are at their most intense and have the greatest impact on the rest of the*

Scanned by CamScanner

world." These regions have gone through a plethora of such conflicts: invasions, wars (civil and military), dictatorships and sectarianism. Exploring the consequences of the war in Afghanistan, collapse of the Soviet Union, invasion of Iraq by the US followed by the role of West in the region and the eventual civil wars leading to the Arab Spring, Cockburn unravels the gradual rise of ISIS.

Five Takeaways

The War in Afghanistan

The first war to follow the watershed event of 9/11 was the Afghanistan war, launched by the US and its allies. The situation in Afghanistan at that time was not quite favourable for the Talibans. There were various powers fragmented all over Afghanistan, with *"even villages [behaving] like independent republics"* (p. 21). Furthermore, there were deep ethnic divisions among the Afghan population with Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazara Shia Muslims being the major ethnicities. In such a split region, Taliban's chances to win the war against US and its allies were quite bleak. Commenting on the *"obvious reasons"* for the defeat of the Taliban, the author states, *"there was the US bombing...there was the hatred felt towards them by the non-Pashtun minorities, who make up 60 per cent of Afghans... and the Pashtuns themselves were never united behind the regime"* (p. 23-24). The US and its allies exploited these weaknesses of Taliban and *"restored many of the much-hated warlords, whom the Taliban had displaced"* (p. 15).

Although the war in Afghanistan was supposed to be followed by an era of stability, but the war never ended. Lamenting

Scanned by CamScanner

upon the nature and the outcomes of war, the author writes, "*Wars turn into bloody stalemates with no outrightwinners or losers, aside from the millions of civilians who are the victims. Political systems decay or are overthrown but nobody is strong enough to replace them*" (p. 14).

Dismantling Iraq

Ever since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the country has never been the same. Although the downfall of Saddam Hussein was expected to be replaced with stabilization, it exacerbated "*the ethnic and religious tensions between Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shia Arabs*" (p. 35). Among such conditions, the rise of terrorist groups such as 'Al-Qaida' and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) became inevitable, even after the restoration of parliament within Iraq and the end of US occupation.

Dismayed with the incumbent situation in Iraq, Cockburn states, "*Bombs, kidnappings and sectarian killings: these are what people talk about in Baghdad*" (p. 97). Iraq has gone through enough: one of the "*biggest exoduses*", a leader "*cruel by nature*" (Saddam Hussein) leading to anarchy through his state, a complete economic desolation, deepened sectarian divide, "*extreme corruption*", forced foreign occupation, devastation brought upon by terrorist organisations and, most importantly, imposition of UN sanctions which rendered the country uninhabitable. It was to such an extent that it became necessary, for most, to sell aluminum extracted by defusing lethal Valmara mines in order to survive.

Return of the Taliban

The Taliban strengthened their stronghold once again as the "*political vacuum*" under "*deep disillusionment with the Karzai*

Scanned by CamScanner

government" (p. 116) created a perfect opportunity for them. Furthermore, the support of ISI, the *"intelligence arm of the Pakistani armed forces"*, helped in regaining Taliban's lost forte. Discussing the lack of professionalism in Afghanistan's government, Cockburn asserts that in addition to being weak, *"the government is also very corrupt"* (p. 123). Thus, several factors gave rise to the return of Taliban, with the news of US calling back its forces giving boost to their confidence. But at the heart of the problem lies the deeply flawed policy of the US, which has now made it very difficult for stability to reach the shores of Afghanistan. Cockburn writes, *"The US has failed in Afghanistan. They will leave a deeply divided country in which reconciliation will be very difficult. The war may soon be over for the Americans, but not for the Afghans."* (p. 129)

The Arab Spring

The term 'Arab Spring', according to Cockburn, *"leads to expectations of fresh flowers of democracy, tolerance and peace replacing brutal and dictatorial old regimes"* (p. 130). The people, however, were *"deceived "*into thinking this way. There were concerns already looming on the horizons of Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, Syria and Tunisia. Cockburn opines that these concerns were *"the product as well as the exploiters of threats to their country's independence from abroad as well as social, sectarian and ethnic divisions at home"* (p. 131). One such concern was propagated from abroad, specifically from the West. There was a lack of *"clarity of objective"* in terms of foreign powers' involvement in the region. Whether the intervention aimed at

Scanned by CamScanner

protecting civilians from the ruthless regimes or there were some power motives and vested interests associated with the intrusion remained unclear. Such a lack of clarity of objectives made it problematic to observe whether a "*foreign-assisted victory*" could bring stability. Thus, it became difficult for new governments to "*reign in the militias and re-establish law and order*" (p. 149).

The region also became a hub of sectarian conflicts. Yemen, dragged between the regional conflicts, has been derailed by the never-ending battle between "*Saudi-led Sunni coalition and its Iranian-led Shia counterpart*" (p 163). The Saudi air strikes have intensified the situation, with terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula being the prime beneficiaries.

Like Yemen, Syria too is entangled with sectarian rifts with the difference that it is far worse than Yemen and has seen much greater inter-play of international forces. It was the sectarian rift that gave rise to the propagation of Jabhat al-Nusra, with Free Syrian Army being "*pushed to one side*". At the same time, the degree of foreign influence has been so high that today the "*shape of the political landscape is determined by foreign powers with diverse and contradictory aims.*" (p. 172). United States, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and other Gulf monarchies have consistently taken part in the Syrian skirmishes. It is only after the inflow of these foreign forces and the chain of events that emanated from this intervention that the Arab Spring turned into the "*Arab nightmare*".

Lamenting the chaotic situation in Syria, propounded by use of chemical weapons and the events leading to mass starvations, Cockburn writes, "*The quagmire is turning out to be even deeper and more dangerous than it was in Iraq*" (p. 179).

Scanned by CamScanner

The Rise of the Islamic State (ISIS)

The rise of the Islamic State was quite evident from the start but the global focus remained on other significant issues– *"Syria, the Arab uprisings and domestic economic troubles"* (p. 197). This lack of attention by the world to this grave development in Iraq and Syria made it easy for the organisation to strengthen its ranks. Soon it emerged as a powerful force in the region, with the rise being so pronounced that the outlet *"was freely carrying out military operations in an enormous area reaching from the Iranian border almost to the Mediterranean"* (p. 194). More importantly, as a result of the failure of Iraqi government in providing security to its citizens, fear and insecurity prevailed in the region which eventually led to citizens becoming susceptible to the ISIS discourse. Supported by the onset of such circumstances, ISIS emerged as *"the most successful jihadi movement ever"* (p. 210). Soon it became *"a deep appeal for millions of young Sunni men for whom the political and economic status quo promises nothing but joblessness and poverty"* (p. 215).

At present, the situation in the region is grotesque: a fierce terrorist outfit has taken over certain areas and is recruiting young men from various regions of the world at an unprecedented rate. there are several other terrorist organisations operating in the region: a number of foreign powers (such as US, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran and Turkey amongst others) are involved in the region, with airstrikes and ground operations being the most frequent happenings of the day; and the rate of exit of ordinary people from the troubled areas has reached a new high, leading to a

Scanned by CamScanner

state of crisis in Europe. Thus, questions such as what to do with ISIS and how to go about solving the crisis in Iraq and Syria arise for obvious reasons. For Cockburn, the answer lies in demilitarization: *"Only a demilitarization of Syrian politics might open the way to other alternatives and a distant prospect of permanent peace."* (p. 263)

Reference: Cockburn, P. (2016). *The Age of Jihad: Islamic State and the Great War for the Middle East*. Verso Books. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

30

Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life

Adam Greenfield

About the Author

Having graduated from New York University, Adam Greenfield also served in the United States Army. Upon leaving army, he started working in information architecture. One of his famous works, *Everyware (2006)*, captured massive attention.

Overview

Technology has transformed the way people experience their daily lives. More specifically, *"networked digital information technology has become the dominant mode through which we experience the everyday"*. Hence, the main objective which this book aims to cover relates to such *"technologies that are already implicated in our daily lives"*. By modifying human perception, such technologies alter the available human choices leading to a remodeled experience of *"space and time"*. Eventually, it becomes a necessity to uncover myriad of inquiries regarding the existence, functions and rationale of these technologies.

Scanned by CamScanner

Six Takeaways

The Smartphone

Being a *'signature artifact'* of our age, smartphone has *"altered the texture of everyday life just about everywhere"* (Greenfield, p. 13). Replacing the conventional phones, smartphone has successfully supplanted *"so many other objects and rituals"* (p. 15). Such replacement of *"artifacts— implying an entire way of life"*— renders human life transformed. So much so that our life is *"shaped by the detailed design of the smartphone handset"* (p. 15). On another level, important decisions are conditioned, leading to varying consequences involving varied actors. Such level of dependence can also be seen through the use of navigation on smartphone, which, according to Greenfield, makes us *"reliant on access to the network to accomplish ordinary goals"* (p. 20). Even more shocking is the ease with which people trade their *"privacy for convenience"*.

"The Internet of Things"

"A weave of networked perception wraps every space, every place, everything and everybody on Earth" (p. 25) in the form of *'internet of things'*. It includes just about everything that connects *"devices, services, vendors... to the network for analysis and response"* (p. 25). Being a broad concept, 'the internet of things' has different scales of activity: at an individual scale it includes *"quantified self"*; at a relatively higher scale it includes *"the smart home"*; and at an even larger scale it comprises *"the smart city"*. Although the scales might differ, but the purpose of 'the internet of things' remains the same: to mine and store data and

Scanned by CamScanner

use them for analysis and decision making. For the purpose of the quantified self, *"performance is continuously monitored and plumbed for its insights into further improvements"* (p. 26). The use of *"wearable biometric monitors"*, such as pedometers, is a relevant example of such measurements.

Next, the *"promise of effortless convenience"* (p. 29) is what the concept of smart home aims to establish. The Amazon *'Dash Button'* is a pertinent example that the author quotes. While the consumer can order anything with just a push of a button, Amazon gets more than that: *"They get data on the time and place of [consumer's] need, as well as its frequency and intensity, and that data has value"* (p. 28). Finally, in a smart city, as the author suggests, *"The broadest range of networked information-gathering devices are... deployed in public space"* (p. 34). Such things aim to *"gather facts about some condition or activity transpiring in the public way, and raise them to network"* (p. 35).

The internet of things, at every scale, poses great challenges to the society. It is a challenge, for example, to identify whether a choice identified by the *"way of interacting with networked information"* was legitimate or a *"paid placement"* (p. 30). Another major challenge arises in the form of threat to security. The author writes, *"Every networked device that goes unprotected... [offers] intruders an aperture through which they might install backdoors, intercept traffic passing across the network, or launch denial-of-service attacks"* (p. 32).

Augmented and Virtual Reality

Augmented reality is a blend of *"cues and graphic overlays with the ordinary world as we perceive it"* (p. 44). Virtual reality, in

Scanned by CamScanner

contrast, is an "*immersive experience*" and "*isolates its wearer from the rest of the visible world*" (p. 44). Both, however, are modes of '*mediation*'. The concept of Augmented Reality is based on informational displays used for aerial combat during 1960s. With the arrival of smartphone, Augmented Reality has gained the perfect platform and a more "*capable hardware*". None the less, concerns regarding quality, truthfulness of representation, visual misregistration, comfortability and implications on "*unaugmented human*" remain prevalent.

Digital Fabrication

John Von Neumann, renowned mathematician, came up with the "*conceptual genesis of the digital fabrication*". The concept evolved with time and today it has emerged as a digital manufacturing process in which machines are controlled through computers. Given the measure at which digital fabrication is done, it would "*undermine the assumptions*" of major economic systems—command and market economies. Furthermore, assumptions regarding distribution, demand, time span, variety, recycling and cost would also come up. Still the concept holds immense significance, and, according to the author, the reason which makes "*digital fabrication truly radical is that it's iterative*", leading to a "*process of thinking-by-making*" (p. 61). He further notes, "*The essence of what is offered to us by digital fabrication isn't so much the ability to satisfy a material necessity, but that you be able to do so yourself*" (p. 69). There are, however, concerns regarding its efficiency and the tendency to create a "*remunerative monopoly*".

Scanned by CamScanner

Cryptocurrency

Cryptocurrency— *"a purely digital currency, founded on computational code breaking"* (p. 73) — was modernized once Satoshi Nakamoto proposed *"Bitcoin"*. It is *"a digital medium of exchange that has been designed to act like cash"* (p. 72). What made Bitcoin special was its ability to *"bypass reliance on any centralized mint... [replacing] trust with cryptographic proof of validity"* (p. 75).

A *"cryptographic signature"* is allotted to each Bitcoin and its user, allowing the *"entire chain of custody"* to be known at any given time. Every transaction is *"timestamped"* and signed cryptographically by participants involved. The message, notifying regarding the transaction, is converted into a distinctive *"hash value"* through specific calculations. The network through which all the transactions take place follows the Bitcoin protocol. Transactions, then, are amalgamated into a *"block"*, collectively forming a *"blockchain"*. Hence, each time a block enters into the blockchain, the transaction is deemed as *"settled"*, eventually becoming a *"permanent record"*. This *"decentralized process"* of validation is termed as *"mining"* (p. 75-77).

Nevertheless, Bitcoin, as a currency, is only *"as valuable as other people think it is"* (p. 80). Despite being a growing technology, Bitcoin *"hasn't become the universal economic solvent"* (p. 81). Firstly, it is because of high latency that the transaction follows—it can take more than an hour for larger transactions to clear. Secondly, it is virtually invisible and includes a process that is not *"particularly straightforward"* (p. 82). Thirdly,

Scanned by CamScanner

even if one has access to Bitcoin currency, it is tiresome to "*locate merchants who might be willing to accept them*" (p. 82). Fourthly, the privacy of concerned parties also stands at a risk. Finally, when the mining operations are concentrated "*in the hands of a very small number of people*", the threat of "*radical degree of recentralization*" (p. 84) becomes inevitable.

Automation, Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence

The aim of automation, to some extent, lies in "*supplanting imperfect human discretion with a synthetic judgment that is invariably figured as free from the contaminating influence of prejudice*" (p. 112). Based upon "*Algorithmic Systems*", automation becomes more '*reliable*', '*obedient*', cheap, safe and leads to a more "*equitable future*". However, apprehensions regarding the removal of "*human beings from the decision loop entirely*" (p. 112) linger on.

The process through which a machine acquires "*ability to learn from its experiences, generalize from what it's encountered, and develop adaptive strategies in response*" (p. 125) is referred to as "*machine learning*". Thus, the algorithms are trained in pattern recognition with the help of automated analysis of vast data. None the less, there are concerns regarding "*bad machine learning*"– "*overfitting and bias*" (p. 128). The former arises when machine memorizes data instead of generalizing from it, and the latter results when "*an algorithm has failed to acquire anything essential at all about the set of target objects it's being asked to identify*" (p. 128).

Greenfield unveils the essence of learning through "*developing the ability to detect, recognize and eventually*

Scanned by CamScanner

reproduce patterns" (p. 150). Such patterns can be easily characterized through the use of powerful processing engines. Discussing the depth of such learning, the author maintains, "*technical systems have learnt at least some skills that have always been understood as indices of the deepest degree of spiritual attainment*" (p. 153). Hence, the "*conscious project*" of artificial intelligence is evolving. However, a confrontation related to machine "*transcendence*" arises with "*algorithmic systems, set free to optimize within whatever set of parameters they are given, do things in ways no human being would ever think to*" (p. 154). According to the author, if such systems acquire heir own "*logics of valuation and justification*", it would be entirely difficult for humans to "*mesh with them*" (p. 155).

Reference: Greenfield, A. (2017). *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life*. Verso Books.

Scanned by CamScanner

31

The Mosaic of Islam: A Conversation with Perry Anderson

By Suleiman Mourad

About the Author

Suleiman Mourad is a prolific historian and religious scientist, currently working as a professor at Smith College in Massachusetts, teaching courses on Islamic history and religion. Having graduated from the American University of Beirut, he went to receive his doctorate from Yale University in 2004. *Early Islam Between Myth and History* and *The Mosaic of Islam* are two of his most celebrated books.

Overview

Never has Islam enticed so great of an attention in the world as it has now. As poignant as it may seem, there are scores of problems Muslim countries are witnessing at the moment. Whether it is the civil wars in the Middle East, an unceasing flow of people immigrating into Europe or the lack of pluralism in institutional structures, Muslim world appears to be immersed in a quagmire. In

Scanned by CamScanner

such a situation, a peculiar methodology of scrutinizing classical Arabic texts has emerged, advancing the course of enquiry. This book presents such an enquiry in an articulate manner, capturing the essence of a long period in a *"single continuous set of reflections"*. Written in a conversational manner in which Perry Anderson interviews the prolific scholar Suleiman Mourad, the book offers profound answers regarding the composition of Quran, life of Muhammad, nature of Arab conquests and Jihad, succession of Caliphate and clashes engulfing it, Shia-Sunni conflict, clarifications concerning Salafism and militant Islam and the *"decline of the classical schools of Islamic Jurisprudence"*.

Thirteen Takeaways

Quran and its Compilation

The Quran was compiled in twenty-two years of time, starting from 610 CE. After the death of Muhammad, a dire need arose — during the Caliphate of Uthman, in 650 — to compile a *"canonical version"* (Mourad, p. 9). Quran is a unique scripture and there should be no parallels drawn between Quran and the Gospels. In the author's words: *"This is a very difficult text, and cannot be compared to the Gospels"* (p. 9). However, some variations do exist between the canonical and San'aa texts. Regarding its form, the Quran focuses more on *"legal boundaries and questions of jurisprudence"* in verses revealed in Madinah. The language itself is evolving, due to which setting up a chronological order is unmanageable. Nevertheless, *"The Quran we have today is the same as the one produced in 650 CE"* (p. 12).

Scanned by CamScanner

The Message of Quran with Reference to the Jews and Christians

According to the author, "*The message of the Quran, like that of biblical prophets, is that our duty is to live according to God's law, and if we do not, God's wrath will fall upon us*" (p. 15). While answering a question pertaining to Jews being the chosen people, the author asserts that the Quran does insists that the Jews were once "*the chosen people*", "*but this changed because they rebelled against God and violated his commandments*" (p. 15). The notion is the same in Christianity where the "*theology of Paul*" depicts that owing to transgressions committed by the Jews, the status of 'the chosen ones' was withdrawn. Answering another question by Anderson vis-à-vis Quran's take on the Christian's belief in Trinity, Mourad says,

> The Qur'an attacks the idea of the Trinity (e.g., 5.73), and takes Christians to task for deifying Jesus (e.g., 5.116). But otherwise, its construction of Jesus's ministry is exactly the mainstream Christian position. He is described as the Word of God and the Spirit from God (4.171)...There is no reference to Jesus as the son of Joseph; Jesus has no father in the Qur'an. It draws the line only at Jesus's divinity. That is what the Qur'an does not tolerate. (p. 13-14)

The Biographies of Muhammad

The initial biography of Muhammad was produced by Ibn Ishaq, during the eighth century, though there is no original copy but references by later historians. The later historians, according to

Scanned by CamScanner

the author, also included "*mystical reflections, generating a figure who was not there in Ibn Ishaq*" (p. 20). Even though the Quran negates any notion that renders Muhammad as a miracle performer, there are biographies which claim otherwise. "*Every biography of Muhammad is thus shaped by the agenda of its author*" (p. 20). Although, it is entirely impossible to understand Quran without the help of biographies, but owing to "*many variations on his [Prophet's] life, and a confusing picture*" (*p. 21*), they create an ironic situation.

Arab Conquests and Jihad

Most of the Arab conquests were conducted through force and some through alliances. Mostly, there was also the "*prospect of loot*". During that time, the two major powers— Byzantine and Persian empires— were already at war with each other. Thus, the populations, "*eager for some kind of stability*", tolerated Arab rule. One of the major allegation put forth by '*Western image*' regarding such conquests is that of forced conversions. But, according to the author, "*when conversions came, they were not under compulsion, but rather out of convenience*" (p. 26). Such conquests, however, are called '*futuh*', not Jihad. But as the Arab empire expanded and forces were dispatched into Afghanistan and the surrounding region, '*futuh*' came to be known as Jihad. Literally, Jihad means, either to make an effort or to struggle in the name of God.

Crusades and Jihad

Commenting upon the impact of crusades on "*revived ideas of Jihad in the Middle East*", the author affirms it has done so effectively. He opines, "*Those who saw the Crusaders as the*

Scanned by CamScanner

unequivocal enemies of Islam and the Muslims produced a radicalized religious rhetoric of exclusion and hatred" (p. 27). None the less, there were also a myriad of Muslims who were at peace with the crusaders, living side by side with them.

Original Nature of Shia-Sunni Conflict

The original nature of the split between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims started as a "*political issue— the belief that Ali should have been the direct successor of Muhammad*" (p. 30) after the death of Muhammad in 632 CE. The schism kept growing over the years and *Karbala* proved to be the event that further solidified the division. After the death of Husayn, the author notices that the "*tremendous Shi'i account of the villainy of Mu awiya and Yazid, and no comparable Sunni counterattack on the legend of Husayn*" leads to a "*strange asymmetry*" (p. 31). Thus, by the ninth century, "*Shi'ism had* started to take root as a *religious sect*" (p. 32).

Sunnism, Salafism and Wahhabism

Salafism refers to an "*attachment to the predecessors... [who] copied the purest form of Islam*" (p. 36). There are two modern forms of Salafism: liberal, almost non-existent, and radical Salafism. The latter is also tied to '*Wahhabism*'— a movement started by Ibn Adbul Wahhab, who "*contended that return to the practices of the Salaf was not enough*" (p. 37). He also declared those who differed from Wahhabism as non-Muslims. Hence, such an annulment of diversity of views, according to the author, is offensive to mainstream Islam.

Pan-Sunnism

To some extent, pan-Sunnism is derived from the teachings of Qutb and Mawdudi. However, "*...pan-Sunnism is now a Salafi*

Scanned by CamScanner

pan-Sunnism—principally the Wahhabi variant proclaimed by the Saudi monarchy... [with] Saudi-Arabia as the champion of pan-Sunnism against Iran, the champion of pan-Shi'ism." (p. 44)

Saudi-Arabia: A Reference Point for Sunnis

Although there exists a split within Wahhabis, with some of them being critical to the Saudi royal family especially in Yemen, but most of the Sunni governments in the world are synchronous with Saudi Arabia. We saw an attempt by Erdogan to lead the Muslim world and become the new face of Sunni Islam after Arab Spring happened, but it failed miserably *"as a result of the failed experiments in Egypt, Syria, Libya, and Tunisia where the Turkey-Qatari alliance has produced disastrous outcomes"* (p. 48). Saudi Arabia still largely remains the reference point for Sunnis, as depicted by the following words of the author.

> The Saudis now have more control over the collective Sunni political impulse than ever before, and that is because we are witnessing an increasing Sunni paranoia toward Iran. It is as if the Shi'i century is coming back, and Sunnis, even those who in theory would not like the Saudis or Wahhabism, are lining up behind Saudi Arabia. (p. 48)

Sufism at Odds with Rigorist Forms of Sunnism

Sufism originated in the ninth century in consequence of Sunnism being *"dry and legalistic"*. It is *"about life of the spirit"* and became necessary once it was felt that Sunnism could not survive without it. Commenting upon *"Sufism and Shi'ism being at odds with rigorist forms of Sunnism"*, the author regards it as true.

Scanned by CamScanner

but also maintains *"that moderate Sunnis are also at odds with rigorist forms of Sunnism"* (p. 51).

Schools of Jurisprudence

Among five major schools of Sunnism—Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali and Zahiri—a theology was never developed; instead *"they focused just on Shari'a"*. However, as a result of modernization, Muslims today *"have no idea as to what school of law they belong to"* (p. 53).

Modernism and Fundamentalism

Originally, there were *"two theological and political tendencies"*: moderate and militant. In a historical manner, moderate remained dominant. However, works such as that of Sayyid Qutb's encouraged Muslims to get rid of *"Jahiliyya... by fighting it and utterly destroying it"* (p. 56). Such views were greatly accepted by leaders such as Osama-bin-Ladin and Ayman Zawahiri.

ISIS Exploiting the Gullibility of Ill-Informed Muslims

> There is a strange apocalyptic hadith attributed to the Prophet Muhammad which predicts that the Day of Judgment will not come until a Byzantine army marches to the field of Dabiq, a small town to the north of Aleppo in Syria, where an army from Medina, featuring the best Muslims on earth, will fight them. (p. 60)

This hadith is frequently found in *"apocalyptic literature"* and goes on to say that one group of Muslims will run away from the battle and will never be pardoned by God, while the other group which fights will be highly valued by God. Then the Antichrist

Scanned by CamScanner

would appear to destroy Muslims followed by the return of Jesus on earth only to join the Muslims' army and kill the Antichrist. The author clearly dismisses this hadith asserting that *"No duel between the Antichrist and Christ exists in the Qur'an"* (p. 61).

This apocalyptic hadith serves as the basis of ISIS' rhetoric on the grounds of which the group exploits the vulnerable Muslims who think that joining the ranks of the outlet can be the only way for their salvation. The militant outfit creates *"a sense of urgency for sympathetic Muslims to rush to join the movement"* (p. 60). It is the effectiveness of this rhetoric that makes gullible Muslims become part of the organisation and commit heinous crimes like terrorism. ISIS employs this memory so consistently that they have a monthly magazine by the name of *Dabiq*.

Reference: Mourad, S. (2016). *The Mosaic of Islam: A Conversation with Perry Anderson*. Verso Books.

Scanned by CamScanner

32

We Should All Be Feminists

By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

About the Author

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian author and activist. Her short stories have appeared in several prestigious publications including The New Yorker, The Financial Times and Granta. Apart from writing critically acclaimed and award winning novels, she is also the receiver of the MacArthur Genius Grant. Some of her works include *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and *We Should All Be Feminists*.

Overview

Originally a TED talk given by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We Should all be Feminists* is a short book about why feminism matters in the 21st century. Adichie highlights the issues of misogyny, gender disparity and toxic masculinity in the simplest possible terms. Drawing from her own experiences, she draws a picture of a world where sexism is so entrenched in the daily functioning of its members that they fail to notice extremely overt

Scanned by CamScanner

manifestations of it. A book that will touch the hearts of many and shatter the ego of some, *We Should all be Feminists* is a fierce critique of…

Two Takeaways

Misogyny: A Consequence of Bad Parenting

Adichie says that misogyny exists in everyday life. Women encounter it everywhere; whether it is wearing a skirt to work or being dismissed in a restaurant by a waiter because you are a female, casual sexism has been entrenched very deeply in our societies. She cites the example of the time she was interrogated by a guard who would not let her in an expensive hotel because he thought she was a prostitute. The guard thought, she states, that a woman could never have enough money to afford a room for herself in such a hotel. The poor guard is not to blame for anything because his perception about women has been developed by the society at large. Our society in general thinks differently about women, taking them as altogether different specie whose capabilities are limited as compared to men.

One major root-cause of this stereotypical attitude towards women arises from parenting. The way we raise our children and the consequent development of attitude stays with them for the rest of their life – shame for the girls and pride for the boys. Therefore, we are directly responsible for upbringing our girls in a way that they show unconditional subservience to patriarchal conventions.

> We teach girls shame. Close your legs. Cover yourself.
> We make them feel as though by being born female,
> they are already guilty of something. (Adichie, p. 14)

Scanned by CamScanner

According to Adichie, the only way to fix this attitude is to raise our sons and daughters differently than the way we have been raised.

We Should All Be Feminists

Throughout the book, Adichie breaks down the myth of feminism being synonymous with misandry. She gives examples where the lack of feminism has hurt men just as much as women. The author suggests that realizing that there is gender inequality and endeavoring to break gender stereotypes very much makes us feminists. "*My own definition of a feminist is a man or a woman who says, yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better. All of us, women and men, must do better*" (p. 22). She also gives examples where the presence of feminism has helped both genders. Covering issues that include victim-blaming in rape cases and forcing women to conform to the stereotypes attached to their gender, Adichie makes the need for feminism very obvious.

Reference: Adichie, C. (2014). *We Should All Be Feminists*. Fourth Estate.

Scanned by CamScanner

33

Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky

About the Authors

Edward S. Herman, a senior media analyst and a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, has written extensively on media and politics. His expertise ranges from financial regulation to political economy and media. *The Politics of Genocide*, *The Real Terror Network* and *The Global Media* are some of his highly praised works.

Noam Chomsky, a seasoned linguist, historian, philosopher and political activist, is one of the most renowned and cited American scholars. He is currently an Institute Professor Emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He has written over 100 books and dozens of bestsellers, some of which include *Understanding Power*, *Failed States*, *On Palestine*, *Power Systems* and *Manufacturing Consent*.

Scanned by CamScanner

Overview

In this modern world of awareness and varying opinions where consent is improbable to be engineered, one institution does so effortlessly. It is the mass media which have achieved this level of *"manufacturing consent"*. In this book, the *"media structure and performance"*— specifically, the US'—are critically analyzed through the use of *"propaganda model"*. Since the mass media serve to further *"special interests that dominate the state and private activity"*, the model aims to *"explain the broad sweep of the mainstream media's behavior and performance by their corporate character and integration into the political economy of the dominant economic system"*. It, therefore, becomes necessary to bring a *"substantial change in underlying media organization and goals"*, in order to ameliorate media structure and performance. Although the book is written in the US context, but the fact that media outlets get influenced by the powerful elites (both government and corporations) and often frame news and analyses accordingly remains universal.

Four Takeaways

The Propaganda Model

Apart from influencing various policy areas, wealth and power also have the ability to *"filter out news"* deemed fit to be reported to the general public. It is a part of the propaganda model which concentrates on the *"inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices"* (Herman & Chomsky, p. 2). The authors outline five major *'filters'*

Scanned by CamScanner

used by the media in an attempt to manufacture consent of the general public.

1. ***"The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms"*** (p. 2). Being businesses of large scale, such dominant media firms have several common interests with major actors, naturally being controlled, rather constrained by greater "*forces*".

2. **Advertising.** It serves as their "*primary income source*". Selective representation of programs according to advertisers' values is a norm. The basic objective is to disseminate their "*selling message*" (p. 18).

3. **Mass-media relying on primary sources.** This kind of relation is based on "*economic necessity and reciprocity of interests*" (p. 18). The colossal cost of acquiring information is, thus, avoided through such sources. Therefore, "*reliable, scheduled flows*" of news are maintained through large bureaucracies—governmental and corporate. These powerful sources have "*privileged access to the gates*" and employ resources to "*influence and coerce the media*" (p. 22).

4. ***"Flak— the negative responses to a media statement or program"***. It keeps the media disciplined. However, direct or indirect, it can be "*uncomfortable and costly*" (p. 26).

5. ***"Anti-communism"***. Although the anti-communist movement seems to have diminished ever since the fall of Soviet Union, it still has a "*profound influence on the mass media... with issues tend to be framed in terms of a dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers*" (p. 30).

Scanned by CamScanner

These "*filters*" constrict the variety of news leading to "*systematic and highly political dichotomization in news coverage based on serviceability to important domestic power interests*" (p. 35).

Worthy and Unworthy Victims

The worthiness of victims is portrayed by the "*propaganda system*". People suffering in '*enemy states*' are deemed "*worthy*", while "*those treated with equal or greater severity by its own government or clients will be unworthy*" (p. 37). Subsequently, the "*definitions of worth*" are framed on political basis. Quoting an example of Jerzy Popieluszko, a polish cleric killed by the Polish police in 1984, the authors state that the extensive amount of media coverage given to him rendered him a "*worthy*" victim. On the other hand, priests along with four US churchwomen who were slaughtered in Latin America failed to "*elicit a propaganda outburst by the mass media*" (p. 38). The qualitative difference between the two was evident from the fact that in case of the former, "*generous*" details were given, with outright demands for justice. While in case of the latter, a "*low-keyed coverage*" was maintained. Similarly, "*Twenty-three religious victims in Guatemala*" were considered unworthy, given the "*quantity and quality of media attention*" (p. 71).

Test for Propaganda model: "*Meaningless Third World Elections*"

Elections in the third world countries are framed in two forms. They can either be of "*friendly client states*" or of

Scanned by CamScanner

"disfavored or enemy countries" (p. 87). It is an *"excellent"* test, according to the authors, to check the applicability of propaganda model. Elections held in the client states, sponsored by the US, are often called *"demonstration elections"*— held for the sole purpose of justifying *"home population that the intervention is well intentioned"* (p. 87). Resultantly, *"favored"* elections are considered legitimate while *"disfavored"* elections are labelled as *"farcical"* (p. 88). The authors have illustrated examples of three such states—El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan state fulfilled all the *"parameters that make an election useful"*—freedom of speech, press, assembly, association and nonexistence of state of terror—but its elections were termed as *"farce"*. Commenting on the role of media, the authors opine, *"The invariable enthusiasm and optimism found by the U.S. mass media in client-state elections has nothing to do with electoral realities"* (p. 120).

Imparting Disinformation

The way media treated the Indo-China wars vindicates their subservience to the propaganda model. Lamenting upon the state the mass media exist in, the authors proclaim, *"How foreign to the mobilized media is a conception of the media as a free system of information and discussion, independent of state authority and elite interests"* (p. 252). Providing ample instances of the *"Vietnamese experience"*, which was aptly skimmed through media *"filters"*, the authors maintain the probability of the US government to exploit it *"for later exercises in international terrorism"* (p. 236).

Scanned by CamScanner

Given the obedience of the *"mindless media"*, it does not come as a surprise when the *"American invaders were regarded as the victims of the aggression of the Vietnamese"* (p. 177).

Reference: Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (2010). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Random House. [Kindle Version]

Scanned by CamScanner

34

Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet

By Julian Assange, Jack Appelbaum, Andy Muller-Maguhn and Jeremie Zimmermann

About the Authors

Julian Assange is an Australian computer programmer and the founder of WikiLeaks. He was catapulted to fame in the wake of famous 2010 publications. He has won many awards for his work in journalism.

Jack Appelbaum is an American journalist, hacker and security researcher. Andy Muller-Maguhn had been a member of German hacker association, Chaos Computer Club, from 1986 to 2012. Jeremie Zimmermann is a French computer science engineer, an advocate of fundamental online freedom and a hacker.

Overview

This book, written in a conversational style between Assange and other aforementioned individuals, talks about the unfair and unprecedented nature of mass internet surveillance. The

Scanned by CamScanner

book is essentially about cypherpunks, activists strongly advocating the use of cryptography (writing in code). These cypherpunks, especially Assange, have been a voice in the wilderness, a voice that challenges the unethical and draconian surveillance over internet by the authorities. In a world, where every move on internet is being watched over by the government, cypherpunks are suggesting strong encryption. To create widespread awareness among the masses, Assange brings some fellow internet activists to question and resist the authorities' unrestrained power to surveil. Cypherpunks is a book that persuades people to think about the legitimate tools of surveillance including Facebook and Google. Are we willing to take up the fight to bring an end to this immoral intrusion into our internet privacy? Or are we just complacent enough to remain silent about it? Silence is tantamount to joining hands with the very authorities that are involved in mass surveillance. In a world where weak are being watched over, the powerful ones get away with anything they do. Over the years, internet scrutiny has skyrocketed only to the disadvantage of general public. Assange and his fellows unveil an array of complex problems through a thought-provoking narrative. The book persuades us to see things through different lens with respect to the modern-day internet politics.

Five Takeaways

War against WikiLeaks

US government and its allies decided to destroy WikiLeaks and people associated with it after the famous publications in 2010. *"These publications are known as Collateral Murder, the War*

Scanned by CamScanner

Logs, and Cablegate" (Assange et al, p. 13). The Department of Justice, with the help of FBI and other relevant departments launched a criminal investigation against Julian Assange and other associates. Conspiracy charges under Espionage Act of 1917 were also included. Many US politicians also called for an extrajudicial assassination of Julian Assange. US government forced all internet service providers *"...to cease services to WiliLeaks.org"* (p. 15). Along with internet censorship, US also launched financial censorship and caused a great deal of financial blockade for the organization. Assange's friends, associates and alleged co-conspirators, Jacob Appelbaum and Jeremie Zimmermann, were also detained, harassed and questioned on multiple occasions. US also tried to seize electronic records such as name, bank account details and other information which might have been relevant to investigation of these associates of Assange.

More Communication, More Surveillance

Assange succinctly describes that there is lack of encryption on our internet usage and that with every Google search, message sent or received and internet move, there is surveillance by the government authorities. Cypherpunks demand this to end. The authors advocate for the privacy and freedom for the individuals using internet. All this communication was initially private, but now it is 'mass interpreted'. The powerful see internet as an illness, a disease and a threat that should be resisted and controlled. The book addresses the instance of 2008 protests against Mubarak in Cairo, which was Facebook-organized. Subsequently, people were detected using same Facebook.

Scanned by CamScanner

Interestingly, the authorities who want to control internet communication always mention cyber-war, without even understanding the complex nitty-gritty of technology. "*Such people are often talking about cyber war and not one of them, not a single one, is talking about cyber peace-building, or anything related to peace-building*" (p. 32). According to Assange, war is their business and internet freedom is a threat to them. Paranoia has only increased with time. From surveilling particular people and specific information, they have now reached a point where they surveil everything.

Tactical Surveillance

It is understandable that the authorities need to filter out some bad guys and they need to tap their phone calls and surveil their internet, but where they draw the line is questionable. Jeremie Zippermann, while raising this interesting point, suggests that this should be done through a judicial procedure. Such mass surveillance is uncalled for and only particular individuals should be under the microscope. Andy Müller-Maguhn identifies the flaw in policy and asserts that politicians sign the documents without any understanding of technological underpinnings. Bad people should be looked over, but there is no policy which calls for a limit. States have an unprecedented authority to have a crackdown on whoever they want. This should be systemic, limited and there should be certain prerequisites, but that is not the case nowadays. Assange is skeptical about mass surveillance and policy that suits it, as he says: "*Once you have that it is complex, given that it is designed to operate in secret, isn't it true that it cannot be regulated with policy?*" (p. 43).

Scanned by CamScanner

Surveillance of Political and Economic Interactions

The book gives myriad of stories embodied in conversation between Andy, Julian and Jeremie, which show how our political and economic interactions are being surveilled. Visa Card, PayPal, MasterCard and all other sources through which financial transactions take place are being looked over by the authorities. Julian gives an interesting and amusing example and says that if Putin goes *erected this surveillance, given* to buy a coke, Washington D.C finds it only 30 seconds later. If we buy anything through credit cards, authorities get to know it. There is no privacy in the world anymore. Governments even oppress dissenting alternatives over the internet. Any forum which criticizes the government can be banned and the people who run it can be detained. Systemic censorship has crippled any debate, dissent and critique of oppressive regimes. One such example is that of Ammar 404 page (nickname given to authorities that applied strict censorship), deployed in Tunisia by Ben Ali's regime. By this kind of censorship, Journalists with differing views were prosecuted, print media was limited and any content that criticized the regime was scarped altogether. The regime controlled internet freedom through stringent censorship. There are a lot of other examples.

Privacy for the Weak, Transparency for the Powerful

Cypherpunks have been all about the afore-stated heading. They call for the freedom of the weak and accountability of the powerful. That is the sole reason why authorities cannot stand Cypherpunks and WikiLeaks. The book reveals the dark secrets of the powerful in this chapter: mass corruption, War Logs and other

Scanned by CamScanner

crimes. We live in a world where ordinary citizens are surveilled unjustifiably by the authorities, while there is neither any surveillance nor any accountability for the powerful. These self-serving laws of censorship are merely stockpiled to limit the freedom of the weak.

The book talks about *"potential utopian scenario"* where such dystopian surveillance does not exist and where there is transparency and individual freedom. Things would only get better when general public is not subjected to draconian surveillance and the powerful are held accountable for their wrongdoings. But in the real world, things are quite opposite to the 'potential utopian scenario'. Today, our freedom is hijacked by the system.

> How can a normal person be free within that system? They simply cannot, it's impossible. Not that anyone can ever be completely free, within any system, but the freedoms that we have biologically evolved for, and the freedoms that we have become culturally accustomed to, will be almost entirely eliminated. (p. 160)

References: Assange, Julian, Jacob Appelbaum, Andy Müller-Maguhn, and Jérémie Zimmermann. *Cypherpunks: freedom and the future of the Internet.* New York: OR , 2016. Print.

Scanned by CamScanner

35

Pakistan's Enduring Challenges

By C. Christine Fair, Sarah J. Watson

About the Authors

A multitude of authors contributed to the book, most prominently, Christine Fair and Sarah Watson. Fair is a political scientist who specializes in military affairs in South Asia. She has authored several books, including *Fighting to the End, Counterinsurgency in Pakistan, The Madrassah Challenge* and *Pakistan's Enduring Challenges*. She is currently a professor in the Department of Peace and Security Studies at Georgetown University. Watson is an Intelligence Research Specialist working for the New York City Police Department.

Ten Takeaways

Pakistani Militancy in the Shadow of US' Withdrawal from Afghanistan

According to this essay, there are two forms of militancy present in Pakistan: prostate and antistate. US' withdrawal from Afghanistan will cause a rise in tensions among the militants, but it

Scanned by CamScanner

will also give them a greater chance to exercise control over their territories, making it harder for Pakistan to manage the militancy – be it prostate or antistate. The diversity of militants and their inter-group tensions make it harder for them to unite and throw off the state of Pakistan. While it can be confidently assumed that the state will have no such threat from militancy, the fact that these non-state actors will continue to endanger stability cannot be ignored.

This author also argues that the sectarian and ideological militancy in Pakistan will not remain as strong as it is now.

> Barring a cataclysmic event, however, and despite the negative trends, extreme outcomes such as fragmentation, the breakaway of discontented provinces, or total state failure are unlikely in the near to medium term. Instead, Pakistan is likely to continue muddling through. (p. 54)

For a state that is already torn apart by internal differences and non-state actors, this assumption is nothing if not positive, because Pakistan might have one less thing to worry about that poses a threat to its integrity.

Militancy's Internal Differences

White highlights how Pakistan's militant forces differ from each other in their operations. This chapter uses *Sura-e-Tauba* as a background to explain these sectarian and ideological differences. This *surat* is considered a doctrine by Islamic militants, which they use as a justification to wage war against non-Muslims and the West. White compares different militant organisations and comes to the conclusion that due to the difference in their interpretation of the

Scanned by CamScanner

said surat, these groups are not likely to unite. This will prevent the occurrence of joint mobilization of militancy in Pakistan.

America's Drone Program

The state of Pakistan has maintained that US' drone strikes compromise the country's sovereignty. However, the book points out that it is the other way around – the establishment secretly supports the drone program. The United States' drone program attacks militants in parts of Pakistan where the military is rendered ineffective. Pakistani military and the United States go hand in hand as far as the program is concerned as both have a common interest in the eradication of FATA-based militants and both want to keep the Pakistani nuclear arsenal secure.

Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal

> Taken together, Pakistan's nuclear dangers are small but real. The absolute possibility of an adverse nuclear event emanating from Pakistan is low, just as it is from any single country globally. (p. 99)

The author provides a detailed overview of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and states that even though the chances of a nuclear event occurring in Pakistan are low, they might increase depending on the country's relationship with India.

Additionally, another factor that would increase the chances of the occurrence of this cataclysm is the country's history with extremism and Islamic militancy.

> But Pakistan's relative risk is high. The source of this relative risk is not a lack of professionalism on the part of Pakistan's nuclear custodians. [...] Rather, nuclear

Scanned by CamScanner

> risk is a by-product of Pakistan's instability, an outgrowth of its dangerous neighborhood coupled with the complicated relationship between the Pakistani state and violent extremism. (p. 106)

Democracy on the Leash in Pakistan

Fair outlines the past, present and future of the Pakistan's army and how it has controlled the government, either directly or indirectly. Secondly, she discusses the role of Pakistan's judiciary and what it means for democracy in Pakistan. Fair implies that with each changing regime, the judiciary is shuffled to the dictator's liking.

> In the days after the bin Laden raid, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, Husain Haqqani, allegedly warned the United States of a coming coup and requested that it intervene to secure the civilian government. In that instance, the military communicated directly with the court without any agency of the civilian government directing it to investigate the matter. Throughout the drama, the court played its "traditional role of facilitating the subversion of representative institutions—relying in the process, once again, on an underlying discourse that coincides with the military's own. (p. 141)

Technological Change and the fate of Pakistani Politics

"*In recent years, a growing number of Pakistanis have come to believe in the revolutionary potential of new media technologies, particularly in the political context*" (p.164). Fair's interest in the use of technology and how it wields power in shaping

Scanned by CamScanner

Pakistan's political scene is understandable since more and more political parties are using social media platforms, television and mobile apps to broaden their approach and reach newer audiences. This change in technology is likely to benefit the civil society too. Fair argues that with the advent of new technologies in Pakistan, such as 3G internet, there is a "*[...] possibility of a greater public role in decision making about contentious security and foreign policies, a domain that has long been the shadowy preserve of the Pakistan military.*" (p. 158)

Pakistan's Economic Dilemma

Pakistan has never really been famous for paying back its loans. Yet, it continues to ask for more. According to the book, Pakistan's economic crisis is self-inflicted.

> The Pakistani state's inability to raise sufficient government tax revenue has meant that the country runs a perpetual budget deficit and faces severe financial constraints that preclude the formation and implementation of an effective economic development strategy, while the massive electricity blackouts (the results of decades of mismanagement, neglect, corruption, outright power theft, and massive unpaid bills) have the concomitant knock-on effects of retarding GDP growth and thus tax revenue and so feed back into the Pakistan government's financing constraint. (p. 187)

One can see that Pakistan's corrupt taxation and energy policies are doing nothing but plunging more daggers into an already bleeding corpse. One can only hope that the process of

Scanned by CamScanner

meaningful tax reforms happens under the ongoing political administration.

US' Strategic Breathing Space

Most of the discourse surrounding the US' withdrawal from Afghanistan suggests that the withdrawal would make Pakistan unstable, resulting in more Islamic militancy. The essay by Staniland also supports the assumption. The relationship between Pakistan and the US has been turbulent and dysfunctional since 9/11. Once the US pulls out of Afghanistan, its reliance on Pakistan and Pakistan's military will be reduced considerably. In the meantime, India will become a more important country in the region from a strategic standpoint. Thus, in the short-run, the withdrawal will make Pakistan more vulnerable and unstable. However, in the long run, this might be beneficial to Pakistan, because civilian leaders will no longer be accused of acting as US' puppets. This might also reduce the influence of military on politics, though to a very small extent. As the chains of events will unfold, the relationship between Pakistan and US might even become functional.

How US is Perceived in Pakistan

The author surveys how the population of Pakistan feels towards the United States.

> Pakistan's public has been polled several times since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent start of the "Global War on Terror" (GWOT). All of these polls show a clear trend of increasing negativity toward the United States, and the

Scanned by CamScanner

> large majority of Pakistanis now express unfavorable opinions of the United States. (p. 227)

Pakistan's Strategic Friendships

Pande gives a very significant historical overview of the foreign influencers who have incited violent instances in Pakistan and Afghanistan, jeopardizing the relations between the two countries. Additionally, this chapter highlights Pakistan's relationship with Saudi Arabia and China. Once the USA leaves Afghanistan, it will also lose interest in Pakistan. To make up for this loss of interest, Pakistani leaders will try to make Pakistan more relevant to China and Saudi Arabia for political and financial security. This may mean that Pakistan might be providing military assistance to Saudi Arabia in kingdom's overseas adventures. It may also result in Pakistan giving overly lucrative contracts and deals to Chinese firms in the hope of getting more strategic support from Beijing.

Reference: Fair, C. & Watson, S. (2015) *Pakistan's Enduring Challenges*. University of Pennsylvania Press

Scanned by CamScanner

36

The Hidden Structure of Violence: Who Benefits from Global Violence and War

By Marc Pilisuk & Jennifer Achord Rountree

About the Authors

Marc Pilisuk is a prolific author, having expertise in conflict resolution, globalization and action research. Currently, he is Professor Emeritus at the University of California. *Peace Movements* and *The Hidden Structure of Violence* are two of his most acclaimed works.

Jennifer Achord Rountree is also an academic who received her doctorate from Saybrook University. Her research interests range from human rights and indigenous rights to community psychology and peace studies.

Overview

Violence in all its forms, direct or structural, has a deeper cause to it. This book unveils the real motive behind the pervasive nature of violence, that is, the incessant benefits powerful elites reap at the disposal of the weak and impoverished due to the existence of

Scanned by CamScanner

violence. Violence originates from war and modern day technology which propels its lethalness and it is promoted through a powerful network which exploits resources globally. Media happens to be an equally responsible institution by controlling and shaping views of audience. Finally, violence takes birth from fear instilled into minds of the weak through cultural beliefs and ideologies.

Four Takeaways

Wars Becoming More Lethal with the Modern Technology

There has been a dramatic shift in the manner wars are waged in the modern era. More astonishingly, consequences of a war have reached a higher magnitude of fatality. The authors argue that the modern technology has entirely altered the course of warfare, which is reflected through infinite civilian causalities and an irreparable harm to our environment. The authors further state that the chemical weapons – through modern transmissions – are used clandestinely, making it exceedingly difficult to detect the users. The magnitude of mayhem created by wars can be estimated through these words of the authors. "*War has caused more than three times the number of casualties in the last ninety years than in the previous five hundred years*" (*Pilisuk & Rountree*, p. 16)

Moreover, military interventions by the developed nations, particularly by the US, have been justified as "*moral responsibilities*". Affluent military spending has, thus, become a norm. As a result, it leads to advances in weapon technology, especially nuclear weapons. What such spending has in store for general public is a question worrying everyone in the world except the ones benefitting from wars.

Scanned by CamScanner

Global Corporate Economy: A Curse for the Working Class

A handful of powerful corporations have managed to gain considerable hold over the global economy. Such concentration of power worries the working class the most as it is this class of people which gets exploited by large corporations. So, the idea that wealth flows from the rich to the poor is completely debunked by the authors. Rather, they note: "*Wealth has flowed upward from the poor countries to the upper financial levels of the richest countries. In the course of these events, progress toward tolerable levels of inequality and sustainable development virtually stopped.*" (p. 107).

In the age of globalization, only hegemonic powers have succeeded in ensuring their well-being. Working class is perpetually exploited. Their living conditions are miserable and very little has been done to improve their lifestyles. Through global corporate economy, the rich continue to become richer and the poor continue to become poorer.

Role of Media in Shaping Our Views

Media, by employing various techniques and selective coverage, not only shape the opinions and world view of the audiences but also psychologically influence them about the degree of importance they have to attach to prevalent issues. Principally, media outlets should disseminate all kinds of information to people by sticking to the ideals of truthfulness and integrity. They, however, tend to succumb to the interests of influential people, thus, presenting things that are contrary to reality. The twisted version of reality, in the opinion of author, allows "*violence to appear both normal and inevitable*" (p. 13).

Scanned by CamScanner

The role of media (in general) becomes particularly heinous in the times of war and chaos when they mold information in a way that directs people to believe in and support their propaganda. In the authors' words: *"There are exceptions, but in the lead-up to war media serve less as the provider of factual information and more as the propaganda arm for officials seeking war."* (p. 248)

Who Benefits from Global Violence and War

Seeing the widespread violence in the modern era, the question that strikes intellectuals' minds is that why violence and chaos are taking roots in most parts of Asia, Africa and other continents when the majority of people living in the planet seek peace. The answer lies in the growing businesses of arms and weapons. With the end of violence, some of the most lucrative businesses in the world would meet their natural demise. As such an outcome is not wanted by the powerful elite running large business empires of military weapons, persistence of violence in the world, especially the Third World, is maintained through a network that *"has become the gatekeeper over resources, lives, and livelihoods"* (p. 13). The consistence with which the policies of overseas wars and airstrikes are adopted by governments in the West, at most instances in violation of the will of domestic population, manifests the extent to which power and authority is concentrated. As the authors argue,

> Military and economic violence in the global era is a reflection of the increasing concentration of wealth among a few dominant players to the exclusion of others. (p. 266)

Scanned by CamScanner

The intoxication of power and wealth prompts these dominant players to dismiss all humanitarian considerations and resort to violence in order to achieve their desired results. Their inhumane indifference toward the plight of the poor sections of the society – affected adversely through wealth concentration – is an apt indicator of their priorities in a world run by corporate elites.

Reference: Pilisuk, M., & Rountree, J. A. (2015). *The Hidden Structure of Violence: Who Benefits from Global Violence and War*. NYU Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

37

Requiem for the American Dream: The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth and Power

By Noam Chomsky

About the Author

Noam Chomsky, a seasoned linguist and political activist, is one of the most renowned scholars in the world. Having a broad experience in a multitude of academic disciplines, his research has gained immense attention and provoked even greater thoughtfulness. By profession, he teaches at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Overview

There was a time, even during most downtrodden periods, when a sense of "optimism and hopefulness" prevailed over the society. "It's over", laments Chomsky at the sight of the great American Dream being destroyed. The hope of achieving upward class mobility, which was a dominant part of the American Dream, has collapsed with inequality, with the wrath of inequality hovering over the poor. The social and economic policies are at the disposal

Scanned by CamScanner

of the "super wealthy". It is after observing such melancholies that Chomsky has given years of his life to outline the "10 principles of concentration of wealth and power" that effortlessly crushed the American Dream. Although the book is written in the American context, the takeaways are of universal value, highlighting the principles through which the elites concentrate wealth and power.

Ten Principles of Concentration of Wealth and Power, Ten Takeaways

1) Reduce Democracy

Since *"democracy puts power into the hands of the general population and takes it away from the privileged and the powerful"* (Chomsky, p. 13), it becomes necessary for the latter to reduce it to ascertain *"that the power rests in the hands of the wealthy"* (p. 16). The powerful class has been pursuing this agenda of reducing democracy for long. Being influential, they have made it unlikely for the governments to address the issue of 'democracy reduction' seriously. The answer to how to go about dealing with the problem is summed up by Chomsky in the following words. *"Aristotle was right—the way to overcome the paradox of democracy is by reducing inequality, not reducing democracy."* (p. 18)

2) Shape Ideology

In order to prevent *"excess of democracy"* and reorganization of *"obedient parts of population"*, it was necessary for the powerful elite to force the working class into the folds of *"passivity"*, making them depoliticized (p. 25-26). Quoting the report of Trilateral Commission, Chomsky asserts:

Scanned by CamScanner

> Trilateral Commission liberals went on to offer measures to reinstitute better indoctrination to control the press, drive people back into passivity and apathy, and let the "right" kind of society develop. (p. 26)

At the same time, various methods of indoctrination assisted to control college students, chiefly in the 70s. Another method was to *"reduce or eliminate free education"* (p. 26). Furthermore, any attempt to criticize concentrated power was derailed by labelling the dissidents as *"anti-Americans"*.

3) Redesign the Economy

Commenting upon the *"vicious cycle of concentration of wealth and power"*, Chomsky states that it arises due to *"financialization and offshoring"* (p. 37). The role of financial institutions has increased by leaps and bounds since the 70s. There has been a *"sharp increase in the role of finance in the economy, and a corresponding decline in domestic production"* (p.35). Likewise, *"offshoring"* has led to the exploitation of cheap labor globally.

Thus, the project of redesigning the economy in the aforementioned fashion, undertaken by a strong nexus of corporations and politicos in the 70s, helped them reach the goal of amassing wealth in a short time. Another aspect of this project was to create *"worker insecurity"*. This allowed workers to be obedient and amenable.

4) Shift the Burden

Ever since the *"Golden Age"*, the economic burden has shifted from those who have extensive wealth—the *"Plutonomy"*—

Scanned by CamScanner

to those who are classified as the *"precariat"*, *"precarious proletariat—the working people of the world who are living a more and more precarious existence"* (p. 45). This has been done in the form of a significant reduction in taxes for the wealthy and a sheer dependence on the working class regarding tax collection. Chomsky, thus, notes. *"The major American corporations shifted the burden of sustaining the society onto the rest of the population"* (p. 46). Such a shift of burden, however, can be placed back through *"mass popular mobilization... that will beat back the regressive tendencies"* (p. 47).

5) Attack Solidarity

A social welfare state is crucial for the betterment of virtually any nation. However, in America, programs such as 'social security' and 'public education' have been attacked time and again. The reason, as Chomsky points out, is that they are *"based on principle of solidarity"* (p.52). For the wealthiest, solidarity is a threat. Similarly, national healthcare has been put aside despite serious criticism from the intellectuals. Chomsky rightly quips, *"40 percent of the population thought it (national health care) already was a constitutionally guaranteed right. But that's not political support—political support means Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, and so on—that's political support."* (p. 54)

6) Run the Regulators

The regulation, as Chomsky puts it, *is "either initiated by the economic concentrations that are being regulated, or it's supported by them"* (p. 60). The exercise of power by large corporations results in a phenomenon called *"regulatory capture"*,

Scanned by CamScanner

meaning that the regulators instead of regulating the corporations start working at the *"will of the powerful"*. Why this happens is precisely because the heads of corporations become advisors to top government representatives and after bidding farewell to the government they join the *"commercial sector"* again, implying that there is a very close association between government and the corporate sector. The author calls it a *"revolving door"* phenomenon in which influential individuals keep moving *"in and out"* of the system. Thus, what is called 'regulation' is in other words a kind of 'cooperation' between the business tycoons and governmental bodies. Resultantly, the ability of the government to formulate any regulatory policy that does not go in favour of the corporations gets seriously inhibited. At the end of the day, the government is only there to *"bail"* large financial institutions that are *"too big to fail"* and *"too big to jail"* (p. 62).

7) Engineer Elections

As the cost of elections increases by the day, concentration of power depends largely on the concentration of wealth. Simply put, political systems are influenced by large corporations which have the *"ability to just buy elections"*, leading to *"shredding of the democratic system"* (p. 69). Elections are, thus, engineered when corporations spend vast amounts of money, *"with virtually no constraint"*, implying that *"businesses and investors, not the voters, have tremendous influence in the political system"* (p. 70).

Driving money out of politics is a tough business. Chomsky believes that it is only after people arganise in the form of protests and movements that a change would come. People should turn *"to*

Scanned by CamScanner

what really matters— the continued effort to develop and organize active dedicated popular movements that will continue to struggle constantly for what has to be done" (p. 71). This will *"build a better-functioning democracy"* (p. 71).

8) Keep the Rabble in Line

The vicious circle of concentration of wealth and power is threatened by a force: *"organized labor"*. The fact that it is a *'democratizing'* energy makes it even more lethal for *"corporate tyranny"*. Historically, the latter has been aiming at suppressing the former. The labour movement in America has been very strong in the first two decades of the twentieth century, but by the 1920s it was completely crumbled. More alarming was the era after the Second World War when the *"business offensive"* emerged. As the offensive intensified, it became almost impossible to form labour unions. Currently, according to the author, there are *"less than 7 percent private sector workers [who] have unions, and it's not because workers don't want unions... they want to unionize—but they can't"* (p. 78).

9) Manufacture Consent

The public relations industry has surged through the realm of growth. Simply, it manufactures consent; it makes people feel whether they do or do not have power. The author explains such an *"engineering of consent"* in a straightforward way: *"They [people] are too dumb to understand so we'll engineer their consent to what we decide, and that's the purpose of the public relations industry"* (p. 85). Resultantly, it leads to another objective—*"fabricating consumers, trapping people into consumerism"* (p. 86). The real

Scanned by CamScanner

goal of advertising, then, is turned upside-down: *"to create uninformed consumers who will make irrational choices"* (p. 87). Similar choices are made during elections by the electorate.

10) Marginalize the Population

Policy is not shaped by the public interest, in view of Chomsky, and the welfare of the society is not primary. Therefore, the general public has, in words of the author, an *"unfocused anger"* toward everything. It is the same reason why Trump achieved public support. His popularity was *"based on hate and fear"*. The subsequent *"generalized rage"* does not come as a surprise. Chomsky justifies it by saying: *"If a society is based on control by private wealth, it will reflect those values—values of greed and the desire to maximize personal gain at the expense of others"* (p. 95). Furthermore, the real threats, most alarmingly for the future generations, such as the *'environmental catastrophe'* and nuclear war have been sidelined.

Change, however, is possible. It lies in activism and interacting with people. Being hopeful, Chomsky writes: *"There's a lot that can be done if people organize—struggle for their rights as they've done in the past—and we can win many victories."* (p. 99)

Reference: Chomsky, N. (2017). Rquiem for the American Dream: The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth & Power. (K. Nyks, P. Hutchinson, & J. Scott, Eds.) Seven Stories Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

38

The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam

By Muhammad Iqbal

Join Us For EBooks & Notes
Telegram Group t.me/CssAspirantsForum
Facebook Group Name CSS Examination Ebooks & Notes
Whatsapp # +92-310-5454503

About the Author

Sir Muhammad Iqbal was a highly influential Muslim thinker, a poet-philosopher and a Sufi at heart. With expertise in Urdu and Persian, he has written thought provoking and inspirational poetry, which earned him a name amongst the greatest poets and thinkers of the modern era. From a philosophical point of view, getting through Iqbal's writings is not an easy feat since they demand critical thought and evaluation.

Overview

The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam is a collection of seven lectures given by Sir Muhammad Iqbal. The book is a major part of 'modern Muslim thought'. These lectures attempt to reconstruct Muslim religious philosophy with *"due regard to the philosophical traditions of Islam and more recent developments in the various domains of human knowledge."*

Scanned by CamScanner

Seven Takeaways

Knowledge and Religious Experience

Iqbal states that religion, higher poetry and philosophy address questions of the universe and our place in it. While philosophy is concerned with addressing the truth and is based on *"free inquiry"* (p. 1), the essence of religion lies in faith. He argues that Quran cannot be understood in light of Greek thought and states that *"the spirit of the Qur'an was essentially anti-classical"* (p. 4). 'Religious experience', according to the author, is *"a state of feeling"* (p. 25) that is difficult to communicate to others.

Philosophical Tests of the Revelations of Religious Experience

Iqbal brings forth three arguments in the beginning of his lecture: the 'cosmological', 'teleological' and the 'ontological'. He goes on to state how these arguments have their flaws and that *"they are open to serious criticism"* (p. 27). He then talks about experience which has three main levels: *"matter"*, *"life"* and *"mind and consciousness"*. He also states that our perceptions of this world are merely illusions. The author criticises various philosophical views of experience and concludes that *"Ultimate Reality is a rationally directed creative life"* (p. 58). While Philosophy sees reality from a distance, religion looks at it from a closer angle.

The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer

Sir Muhammad Iqbal starts this lecture by trying to understand the concept of God. The author conceives the *"Ultimate Reality as an Ego"*. The Quran gives the 'ultimate ego' the *"proper name of Allah"* (p. 59). He says that the important elements in the

Scanned by CamScanner

Quranic conception of God are *"Creativeness, Knowledge, Omnipotence and Eternity"* (p. 61). This universe is a manifestation of God's infinite creative energy and this *"creative method of Divine energy is atomic"* (p. 63), according to the Asharites.

The lecture moves onto the concept of *"meliorism"*, which *"recognises the growing universe and is animated by the hope of man's eventual victory of evil"* (p. 77). The lecture then explores the concept of freedom. He contends that goodness cannot emerge from compulsion. *"Freedom is thus a condition of goodness"* (p. 81). God also has *"immense faith in man"* (p. 81) that they will choose well.

Religion seeks a more *"intimate knowledge of and association with the object of pursuit"* (p. 84). This association is achieved through the act of worship. This, however, *"affects different varieties of consciousness differently"* (p.84). Prayer, he says is the *"expression of man's inner yearning for a response in the awful silence of the universe"* (p. 87). The real object of prayer is achieved when it becomes congregational as *"the spirit of all true prayer is social"* (p. 87).

The Human Ego – His Freedom and Immortality

The Quran emphasises the "individuality and uniqueness of man" (p. 90). He says that three main points are clear in the Quran: *"man is the chosen of God"*, *"Man, with all his faults, is meant to be the representative of God on Earth"* and *"The man is the trustee of a free personality which he accepted at his peril"* (p. 90). Iqbal tries to explain the concept of ego by maintaining that the *"characteristic feature"* (p. 93) of ego is *"unity of what we call*

Scanned by CamScanner

mental states" (p. 93). The ego is not space-bound like the physical body and the time span of the ego is different from a physical event. Another important characteristic of the unity of ego is *"essential privacy which reveals the uniqueness of every ego"* (p. 94).

He also brings the reader's attention to the distinction between the words *"amr"* and *"khalq"*. These two words are used to express how God's creative energy is used to reveal itself to us. *Khalq* is creation and *amr* is direction. He says that a person's real personality is *"not a thing, it is an act"* (p. 98). A person cannot be interpreted as a *"thing in space"* (p. 98), rather they need to be perceived through their *"judgements, attitudes, aims and aspirations"* (p. 98).

He posits that according to the Quran, the ego *"has a beginning in time and did not pre-exist its emergence in the spatio-temporal order"* (p. 110). He also says while explaining a Quranic verse that the it is *"with the irreplaceable singleness of his individuality that the finite ego will approach the infinite ego to see for himself the consequences of his past and to judge the possibilities of the future"* (p. 111). This also gives insight into the Islamic theory of salvation. He concludes by saying that *"whatever may be the final fate of man, it does not mean loss of individuality"* (p. 111). *"Life offers a scope for ego activity and death is the first test of the synthetic activity of the ego"* (p. 113).

The Spirit of Muslim Culture

This lecture is started by looking at the differences between the prophetic and mystic type on the consciousness. The author says that one of the ways that a prophet's religious experience can be

Scanned by CamScanner

judged is to *"examine the type of manhood that he has created and the cultural world that has sprung out of the spirit of his message"* (p. 118). With this, Iqbal examines the culture of Islam.

One of the most important points that he stresses on is the significance in the ending of the 'prophethood', and it is necessary *"to understand the cultural value of a great idea in Islam"* (p. 119). This had laid a foundation for cultural development in Islam to keep it updated with the changing times. This generates an independent attitude towards life and makes the followers fully responsible for their actions.

One source of human knowledge is inner experience, and according to the Quran, there are two other sources of knowledge: *"nature and history"* (p. 121). The teachings of Quran that the universe is *"dynamic in its origin, finite and capable of increase"* (p. 122) brought Muslim thinkers in conflict with Greek philosophy. He again says that the *"spirit of Islam is essentially anti-classical"* (p.122). According to Iqbal, Muslim thinkers should not use the speculative nature of Greek philosophy; the spirit of Muslim culture *"fixes its gaze on the concrete, the finite"* (p. 124).

The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam

According to Iqbal, the principle of movement in the structure of Islam is 'Ijtihad' - *"the word literally means exert"* (p. 141). This also means to form an independent judgement on a legal question. Ever since the establishment of schools, the theoretical possibility of the degree of ijtihad has been denied. This seems strange when looking at the *"groundwork provided by the Quran which embodies an essentially dynamic outlook on life"* (p. 141).

Scanned by CamScanner

Iqbal then tries to see the reasons for this intellectual attitude. There was a fear that rationalism would compromise the foundations of the Muslim community. The organisation by the early scholars of Islam led to the exclusion of innovation in the 'sharia' and largely took away the power of the individual in Islam.

The main sources of the Mohammaden Law are Quran, Hadith, Ijma and Qiyas. The primary source of law of Islam is the Quran. It is, however, *"not a legal code"* (p. 157). He says that *"the main purpose of it is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his relation with God and the Universe."* (p. 157). He again brings to focus the *"dynamic outlook of the Quran"* (p. 158).

The second great source of Muhammaden Law is the traditions of the Holy Prophet. There are two types of hadith: one is *"purely legal"* (p. 163) and other is of *"non-legal character"* (p. 163). The author says that according to Shah Walli Allah, *"law revealed by a prophet takes special notice of the habits, ways and peculiarities of the people to whom he is specifically sent"* (p. 163).

The third source of Muhammaden Law is Ijma, which according to the author is *"perhaps the most important legal notion in Islam"* (p. 164). The fourth main source is Qiyas.

The world of Islam is in need of reconstruction. Iqbal asserts that humanity needs three things today: *"a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and the basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis."* (p. 170).

Scanned by CamScanner

Is Religion Possible?

The final lecture starts off by seeing religious life as divided into three periods: "*Faith, Thought and Discovery*" (p. 171). The first period is a "*form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command*" (p. 171). This is followed by a "*rational understanding of the discipline and the ultimate source of its authority*" (p. 171). In the third period, a logical view of life is searched with God as part of that view.

The author says that the "*method of dealing with reality by means of concepts is not at all a serious way of dealing with it*" (p. 174). Religion "*is the only serious way of handling reality*" (p. 174). The modern man lives in secret despair "*behind the screen of scientific terminology*" (p. 177). He is overshadowed by his intellectual activity and has, therefore, "*ceased to live soulfully, that is, from within*" (p. 177).

Iqbal argues that even though the scientific processes and religion have different methods, their final aim is identical: "*both aim at reaching the most real*" (p. 185). He further says that "*religion is far more anxious to reach the ultimate real than science*" (p. 185). The scientific and religious processes are parallel to each other; both are descriptions of the same world. The only difference is that for the scientific processes, "*the ego's standpoint is necessarily exclusive*" (p. 185) and for the religious processes, "*the ego integrates competing tendencies and develops a single inclusive attitude*" (p. 185).

Scanned by CamScanner

References: Iqbal, M. (1934) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. London: Oxford University Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

39

Pakistan: Beyond the 'Crisis State'

By Maleeha Lodhi

About the Author

A seasoned diplomat with a passion for political science and print media, Maleeha Lodhi has served Pakistan in an esteemed manner. She has received '*Hilal-e-Imtiaz*' for her exceptional delivery in public service. Currently, she is serving as Pakistan's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Previously she served as Pakistan's ambassador to the United States twice. She is also a Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, and has also been the founding editor of The News. Some of her works include *Pakistan's Encounter with Democracy*, *The External Challenge* and *Pakistan: Beyond the Crisis State*. Maleeha Lodhi, as the editor of '*Pakistan: beyond the crisis state*', has compiled practical policy recommendations by top-notch scholars, journalists and experts.

Scanned by CamScanner

Overview

Having sailed through monstrous storms with supreme resilience, the nation of Pakistan stood the test of time well. Despite being immensely capable and resourceful, Pakistan has been marred by *"poor governance, rule without law and short-sighted leadership"*, the combined effect of which has obstructed *"Pakistan's progress and development"*. Still, however daunting the challenges may seem, it is entirely possible to conquer them—particularly, through *"bold reforms"*. Accordingly, this book has been compiled to provide ample yet adoptable policy perspectives from Pakistan's top practitioners and scholars. The book covers themes of *"governance, security, economic and human development and foreign policy"*, emphasising the complicated juncture of *"domestic and international factors"* that have molded the *"Pakistan experience"*.

Fifteen Takeaways

The Past as Present — *Ayesha Jalal*

Ayesha Jalal views the current state of *'paranoia'* existing in Pakistan *"in the light of a troubled past"* The reasons for such a state are diverse. Firstly, people have been given *"emotive lessons in ideology"* which reinforce *"hastily constructed national myths"*, leading to *"self-glorification of an imagined past"*. Secondly, the people of Pakistan have failed to realize the significance of a *'credible'* history, thus, failing to *"develop a historical consciousness"*. Thirdly, the *'Indian factor'* and threats from *"within"* have pushed Pakistan towards the contours of a *"security state"*. Fourthly, the *"Islamic Shift"*, from Jinnah's *'Unity, Faith*

Scanned by CamScanner

and Discipline' to Zia's *"Faith, Piety and Jihad"* coupled with *"administrative paralysis"* changed the whole course of history of Pakistan. Lastly, the *"clash of interest with America in Afghanistan"* in the post-9/11 scenario, emanating from Pakistan Army's *"clandestine"* support to Afghan Taliban, set a hideous chain of events in motion, the effects of which are still being faced. Nevertheless, these concerns can be addressed through *"neutralizing security concerns"* of Pakistan Army and creating an atmosphere of *"open dialogue and discourse"*. (Lodhi, p. 7-20)

Why Jinnah Matters — *Akbar Ahmed*

Many a time, throughout Pakistan's history, the debate between *"those demanding a theocratic state and others urging a balance between the two"*—theocratic and modern states—has always been passionate. The debate dates back to the years following Jinnah's demise and has, since then, been mostly won by Islamists with brief intermittent periods of victory for democrats. Islamists spearheaded by Abul A'la Maududi emphasised making Pakistan a theocratic state, despite the fact that Jinnah suggested the opposite. Although *"Jinnah's ideas about Pakistan remained vague"*, it was clear that he did not support *"a theocratic state run by mullahs"*. It can be safely said that Jinnah's vision of Pakistan included protection of minorities, a *"need to check provincialism"*, support for refugees, *"cordial relations"* with India and *"maintaining standards of neighborly courtesy"*. (p. 21-31)

Why Pakistan Will Survive — *Mohsin Hamid*

Providing a sense of optimism, Mohsin Hamid divulges the importance of assets bestowed upon Pakistan. Diversity is one such

Scanned by CamScanner

strength, which has unluckily been more of a disadvantage than Pakistan's benefit. As demonstrated by the success of countries in both the Global North and South, diversity plays a key role, both in terms of economy and culture. It is time Pakistan took use of its strengths. Now that a system of democracy has also developed after decades of military rule, there is a lot Pakistanis can be hopeful about. The country is not *"as poor as people think"* and the solutions to problems Pakistan face are also not too complex to conceive. Something as simple as a *"tax revolution"* could create the difference and enable the state to spend more on education and healthcare. Moreover, a change in approach towards relations with the US would complement the development aspirations. Such an approach would focus less on aid and more on ceasing US intervention in Pakistan's affairs. (p. 35-43)

Beyond The Crisis State — *Maleeha Lodhi*

Pakistan has to choose between a *"quagmire of weak governance, politics-as-usual, economic stagnation, and crumbling public faith in state institutions"* and a moment of opportunity in the form of rising middle class. In the past, there have been ample failures, especially during Zia's regime, but Pakistan can still capitalize on its *"transformational trends"*— *"politically confident middle class, fostered by economic growth, and empowered by information revolution"*. Pakistani politics have been shaped by various factors including *"power asymmetry"* between elected and non-elected institutions, *"feudal-dominated"* politics, *"borrowed growth"*, ideological disputes and *"enduring quest for security"*. None the less, the political parties can revitalize themselves by

Scanned by CamScanner

harnessing *"new aspirations of people empowered by social and economic changes"*. (p. 45-77)

Army and Politics — *Shuja Nawaz*

Pakistan Army, *"the best organized group and a veritable political force"*, has dominated the political arena of Pakistan for decades. From the very start, the senior ranks of Pakistan Army *"saw the army as a unique institution, separate and apart from the rest of civil society and authority"*. As the army enhanced its scope, the political development got obstructed. Such a dominant role was propounded by *"war against terror"*, with army becoming a *"corporate entity"*, mushrooming budgetary allocations, operating *"outside the bounds of normal legal systems"* and helping military officials get employed in civil institutions. Hence, the army *"needs to take a back seat"* and let politicians be checked by *"important elements of the society"*. (p. 79-94)

Ideologically Adrift — *Ziad Haider*

Throughout Pakistan's history, religion has been used in many instances. It played a cardinal role in altering *"nation building and security objectives"*. Such an alteration was quite evident during the process of constitution-making in Pakistan. Initially, it was the Objectives Resolution in 1949, laying the foundation for the constitution of Pakistan, which *"injected religion into the core of Pakistan"*. The following years saw *"Bhutto's Islamic Socialism"*, Zia's Islamisation, Musharraf's *'enlightened moderation'* and eventually *'Talibanization'*. During all these eras, religion has been used as a shield to gain political scores. What is needed is to focus

Scanned by CamScanner

on *"building an inclusive and robust Pakistani state invoking progressive Islamic values"*. (p. 113-130)

Battling Militancy — *Zahid Hussain*

Threat of militancy has always been a source of Pakistan's worries, especially in terms of stability. The issue surrounding this ever-looming threat relates to *"lack of a comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategy"*. With a *"holistic approach"* coupled with *"political mobilization"*, confines of terrorism can be shattered. (p. 131-148)

Retooling Institutions — *Ishrat Husain*

The reason why economic policies have failed to materialize results lies in the *"institutions intermediating these policies"*. Over time, these institutions have been *"deteriorated"* in terms of *"economic governance and decision-making"*. Therefore, it is important to *"retool"* them. The agenda should include: reforming civil services, *"restructuring federal, provincial and district governments"*, improving *"delivery of basic services"*, *"strengthening key institutions of governance"* and reforming *"institutions of restraint"*— formal, such as media, judiciary and FPSC, and informal, such as trust and civic norms. (p. 149-168)

An Economic Crisis State — *Meekal Ahmed*

Outlining *"key"* macroeconomic reforms, the author describes the significance to implement them. These macroeconomic reforms pertain to controlling inflation, *"equitable and effective"* taxation, introduction of social safety nets, *"raising domestic savings"*, implementing *"export-led development*

Scanned by CamScanner

strategy", boosting "*Total Factor Productivity (TFP)*" and streamlining "*Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs)*". It is only after the successful implementation of these reforms that the economy would become "*resilient, more efficient and self-sustaining*". (p. 169-200)

Boosting Competitiveness — *Muddassar Mazhar Malik*

Despite many challenges, Pakistan has the ability to gain economic success given its resilience, potential, ability to withstand "*geo-political risk*", "*demographic asset*", natural resources and, most importantly, strategic location. However, it is equally important for the country to improve its competitiveness. It can do so, according to the author, by developing a '*clear vision*', improving governance and infrastructure, "*becoming the region's food reservoir*", enhancing educational standards, improving skilled work force, "*boosting exports and transforming textiles*" and refining the SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) Sector. (p. 201-230)

Turning Energy Around — *Zian Alahdad*

Zian Alahdad in his essay, "*Turning Energy Around*", highlights the core principle which can curb the energy crisis in Pakistan. The author states, "*The elusive fundamental in Pakistan's energy sector reform is IEP (Integrated Energy Planning) and the imperative of adopting this is unquestionable*". IEP, a five-step process as shown in figure 1, employs optimal use of resources to attain socio-economic progress. It "*integrates the policies and plans of the energy sector with national economic objectives, while*

Scanned by CamScanner

ensuring close coordination and consistency between each of the energy sub-sectors". (p. 241)

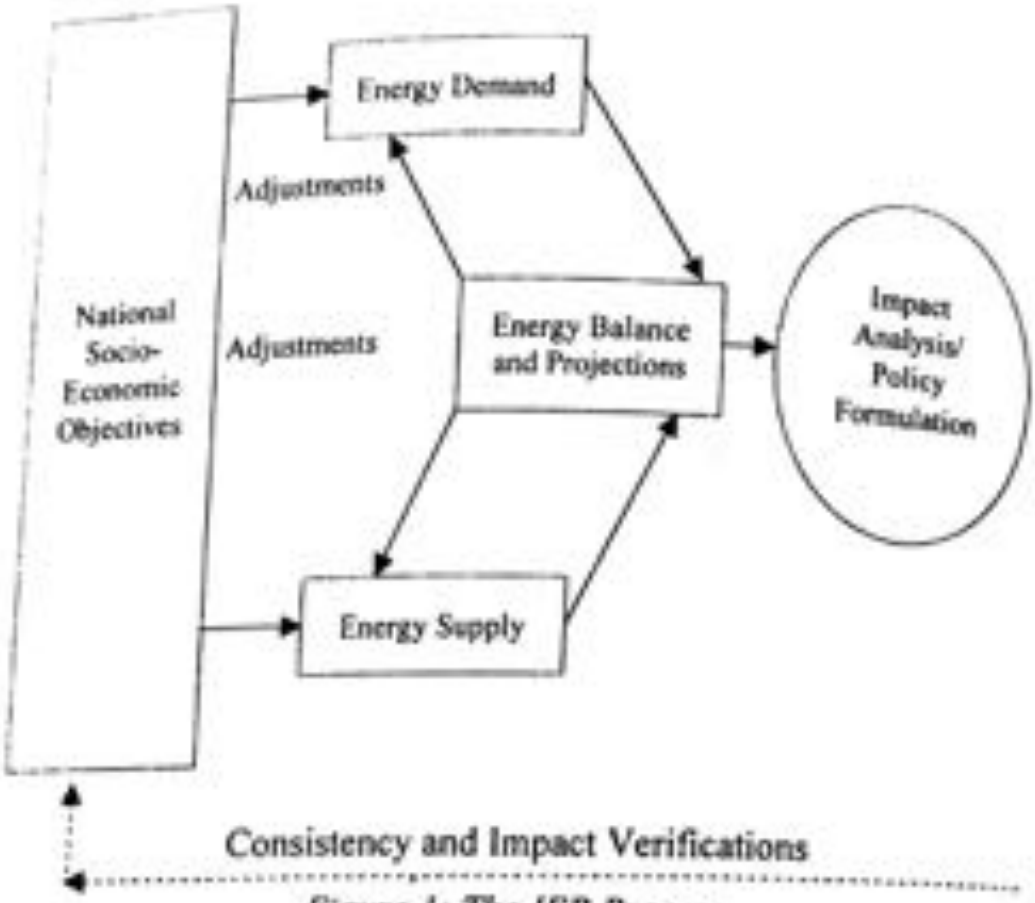

Figure 1: The IEP Process

Education as a Strategic Imperative — *Shanza Khan* and *Moeed Yusuf*

Lack of education plays a major role in forcing Pakistan into a state of crisis. The issue "*lies at the heart of Pakistan's multiple challenges*". With high quality and "*value-neutral education*", Pakistan can not only "*challenge the salience of the Islamist discourse*" but also successfully restrict radicalization of youth. Quality education should, therefore, "*not only be a development priority but also a strategic one*". The failures concerning the education sector carry the "*potential of rupturing the*

Scanned by CamScanner

very fabric of society", making it obvious why "*education remains central to Pakistan's recovery*". (p. 251-266)

Pakistan as a Nuclear State — *Feroz Hassan Khan*

Due to lack of "*comparable resources*", Pakistan relies on its nuclear weapons for "*deterrence purposes*". Such deterrence does not work in isolation but "*requires a mixture of credible force, demonstrative capability, and a manner to convey its will to the opponents*". In future, all types of deterrents—land, sea and air—are likely to improve and evolve. In such a scenario, the role of nuclear weapons will "*primarily depend on trajectories of regional security dynamics*"—aftermath of Afghanistan war, "*regional power balance between India and Pakistan*", US policy vis-à-vis "*Asia and the Muslim World*" and the "*current domestic crisis*". (p. 267-282)

The Afghan Conundrum — *Ahmed Rashid*

With Afghanistan facing anarchy in every corner, Pakistan undergoing swelling domestic challenges and still "*vying for influence*" in Afghanistan and the West questioning the US-led operation and viewing Pakistan from a lens of suspicion, the author terms the case of Afghanistan as a "*conundrum*". It is extremely important for Pakistan to see a stable Afghanistan and have good relations with it, though historically the relationship "*has been a roller coaster ride*". Despite the incumbent civilian government, the Pakistan Army "*continues to run the country's Afghan policy*". Nevertheless, the military must ensure defeat of the Pakistani Taliban and "*gain minimum strategic interests and not turn the*

Scanned by CamScanner

entire region into a cauldron of competition as existed in the 1990s". (p. 305-318)

The India Factor — *Syed Rifaat Hussain*

Although the "*enduring rivalry*" between India and Pakistan has made both the countries go for an all-out war more than twice, but the prospect of peace still seems high. The fact that various bilateral talks and agreements between the two have been successful deems such a view rational. The peace process has been stalled owing to particular "*roadblocks*" which are listed below.

- the "*clash of opposing ideologies*"
- "Pakistan's fear of India's sheer size and the pair's strategic and economic asymmetry";
- the persistent "*trauma of partition*" *and*
- the Kashmir dispute

Paying special attention to the Kashmir issue, the author asserts that without resolving it a peace process "*will not only remain devoid of substance but also perennially vulnerable to attempts by various kinds of spoilers to derail it*". (p. 319-348)

Reference: Lodhi, M. (2011). *Pakistan: Beyond the" crisis State"*. Columbia University Press.

Scanned by CamScanner

40

Alternatives to Capitalism: Proposals for a Democratic Economy

By Robin Hahnel & Erik Olin Wright

About the Authors

Robin Hahnel is an economist, a political activist and the author of several books some of which include *The ABCs of Political Economy*, *Economic Justice and Democracy* and *Of the People, By the People*. He is currently a professor of economics, teaching at Portland State University. He is also a strong advocate of environmental conservation.

Erik Olin Wright is a sociologist, currently teaching at University of Wisconsin. Some of his books include *Class Counts*, *Envisioning Real Utopias* and *Understanding Class*. Both the authors are known and praised for their work on viable and constructive alternatives to capitalism.

Overview

Capitalism has long been criticized for its imminent and profound deficiencies but rarely has anyone come up with an

Scanned by CamScanner

effective and practical replacement for it. In this respect, the book, Alternatives to Capitalism, is one of its kind. The book is a debate between two probable alternatives to capitalism — 'participatory economics' and 'socialist utopia'.

The detailed discussion begins after the authors list some of the key injustices resulting from capitalism including "*...poverty, exploitation, instability, hierarchy, subordination, environmental exhaustion, [and] radical inequalities of wealth and power*". The authors then proceed providing several answers to the question raised: "*but is there a preferable and workable alternative?*" Each of the answers is critiqued to provide a comprehensive analysis of the subject and each of them acts as a major contribution in clarifying the path towards the best economic model.

Three Takeaways

Participatory Economics

As the term shows, participatory economics is largely based on participation of different elements of an economy (consumers, sellers, suppliers etc) in how it is run. It is an attempt to avoid market failures occurring under capitalism by shifting the power from market forces of demand and supply to individuals that partake in a market on day-to-day basis. In other words, Hahnel's approach aims to achieve "*economic democracy, economic justice, and human solidarity*" (Hahnel & Wright, p. 1) by using a bottom-up approach with no central power.

This change in institutional design is divided into four parts:

Scanned by CamScanner

i. Separate councils of workers and consumers should be made for every region where "*each member has one vote*". These "*self-governing democratic councils*" will consist of all the suppliers and consumers from that region and act as a platform for buyers and sellers to unanimously agree on an annual plan to avoid influxes, consumer/producer surplus or any other market problems.

ii. Every council should set its own regulations and assign jobs in accordance with the "*empowerment and desirability*" of its members. This will ensure that every labourer or worker has a fair chance at landing employment.

iii. Compensation or salary for every individual should be decided by their workmates who can truly assess the contributions made by him/her.

iv. Finally, a nationwide "*participatory planning procedure*" should be employed where "*councils and federations of workers and consumers propose and revise their own interrelated activities without central planners or markets*" (p. 2).

All of these measures, if carried out properly, will eventually produce outcomes that are not only efficient and profitable (like under capitalism) but also "*equitable, and environmentally sustainable*" (p. 2).

Socialist Empowerment: Hybrid of Socialism and Real Utopias

The second alternative to capitalism is categorized under "*socialism and real utopias*" where socialism is defined as "*social*

Scanned by CamScanner

power" instead of state/authoritarian power. Real utopias, on the other hand, refer to *"institutional designs that simultaneously attempt to embody emancipatory ideals... while still being attentive to the practical problems of viability and sustainability"* (p. 60)

Wright's approach, unlike Hahnel's, is a hybrid of practical institutional change and socialist values. The approach suggests that no economic structure is fully capitalist or entirely socialist. Instead, each economy has a power-centric framework and this power is distributed in three key components: statist power (power vested in the government), social power (power possessed by general public in the form of democracy) and capitalist power (power of capital's owners). Therefore, the objective should not be to fix the *"simple binary notion of capitalism versus socialism"*; instead efforts should be made *"to enlarge and deepen the socialist component of the hybrid and weaken the capitalist and statist components"* (p. 65).

This strengthening of the socialist component is termed as *"socialist empowerment"* and can be achieved in a number of ways. Two of them are described below.

The Marxist or classical form of socialism. Under this system, *"social power controls economic activity via the state"* (p. 69). In simpler words, state regulates investment, production, distribution and other kinds of economic activity, and in turn common people control the state via democracy. In Wright's words:

> Investment, production and distribution are directly controlled by the exercise of state power while, at the same time, state power is itself subordinated to social power by being democratically accountable to the people. (p. 69)

Scanned by CamScanner

Creation of *"solidarity economy"*. Under this structure, socialist empowerment is achieved without any direct involvement of the state. Common people join to form *"collectivities"*. These collectivities work for the welfare of the people. State may fund these collectivities but is never directly involved in how these organizations operate. An example here is taken of Quebec.

> In 2008 parents only paid seven Canadian dollars per day for full time daycare for preschool children provided by community-based nonprofit daycare center, but provincial government subsidies ensured that providers were paid a living wage. These daycare centers were often organised as "solidarity cooperatives", an organisational form governed by elected representatives of staff, consumers (parents in this case) and community members. (p. 77)

However, the key problem with both these structures is that they fail to register the massive power of capital. Whenever socialism or social power manages to threaten capitalist dominance, it is *"relentlessly attacked and undermined"*. Therefore, *"...real progress in advancing the project of democratising the economy through these configurations seems impossible so long as capitalism is dominant" (Hahnel & Wright, pp. 86).*

Robin's Planning vs. Erik's Markets

While both Robin Hahnel and Erik Olin Wright oppose capitalism, their methods in dealing with capitalism vary a great deal, with the key difference between both approaches relating to markets and their role. Advocates of 'participatory economics/planning' believe that markets are *"cancer"* (p. 116) to an equitable and environment-friendly economy. On the other hand, Wright is of a view that *"markets and market-like arrangements...*

Scanned by CamScanner

are the simplest and most effective way of dealing with certain specific problems" (p. 85). They cannot be blamed for the way people act. Moreover, it is practically impossible to overthrow them and introduce a completely new system. As Wright notes:

> I, like Robin, am disposed to give great weight to the participatory mechanisms because of the ways these embody values of equality and democracy, but I am very skeptical that these could ever completely displace markets, or even, really, that this should be some bottom-line goal to which we aspire. (p. 12)

Hahnel, in response to this, states that participatory economics does not propose displacement of markets; instead it plans to *"tame markets until a majority supports replacing them altogether with something far better"*. Furthermore, it tends to fight

> the presumption that had become increasingly widespread even among leftists, that we must choose between authoritarian planning or a market economy... There is a third alternative – which turns out to look very much like the kind of economy socialists envisioned long ago. (p. 57)

Therefore, there is not much difference between the approaches stated above except that "*participatory economics fight to tame markets... while market socialists fight to tame markets to keep them"* (p. 4). None the less, both the approaches clarify the path forward and must be referred to when a global structural change (economically) becomes inevitable.

Reference: Hahnel, R. & Wright, E. O. (2016) *Alternatives to Capitalism Proposals for a Democratic Economy.*

Scanned by CamScanner

References

Anderson, P. (2014). *American foreign policy and its thinkers*. Verso. Print.

Adichie, C. (2014). *We Should All Be Feminists*. Fourth Estate.

Assange, J., Appelbaum, J., Müller-Maguhn, A. & Zimmermann, J. (2016). *Cypherpunks: freedom and the future of the Internet*. New York: OR. Print.

Brandal, N., Bratberg, Ø., & Thorsen, D. (2013). *The Nordic model of social democracy*. Springer.

Baradei, M. (2014). *The age of deception*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. Print.

Benjamin, M. (2016). *Kingdom of the unjust: behind the U.S.-Saudi connection*. New York: OR. Print.

Cockburn, P. (2016). *The Age of Jihad: Islamic State and the Great War for the Middle East*. Verso Books.

Cockburn, P. (2016). *The Age of Jihad: Islamic State and the Great War for the Middle East*. Verso Books.

Chomsky, N. (2017). Requiem for the American Dream: The 10 Principles of Concentration of Wealth & Power. (K. Nyks, P. Hutchinson, & J. Scott, Eds.) Seven Stories Press.

Davis, M. (2006). *Planet of Slums*. Verso.

Scanned by CamScanner

Feyter, K. (2005). *Human rights: Social justice in the age of the market*. London/New York, Zed Books.

Fair, C. & Watson, S. (2015) *Pakistan's Enduring Challenges*. University of Pennsylvania Press

Glass, C. (2016) *Syria Burning: Isis and the Death of the Arab Spring*. OR New York and London.

Giroux, H. A. (2015). *America's Addiction to Terrorism*. NYU Press.

Greenfield, A. (2017). *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life*. Verso Books.

Hahnel, R. & Wright, E. O. (2016) *Alternatives to Capitalism Proposals for a Democratic Economy*.

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (2010). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Random House.

Ispahani, F. (2017). *Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan's Religious Minorities*. Oxford University Press.

Iqbal, M. (1934). *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. London: Oxford University Press.

Jalal, A. (2014). *The struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim homeland and global politics*. Harvard University Press.

Klein, N. (2014). *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate*.

Kingsley, P. (2016). *The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis*. Guardian Faber Publishing.

Kelly, K. (2016) *The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces That Will Shape Our Future*. Viking Press.

Lieven, A. (2012). Pakistan: a hard country. New York: Public Affairs.

Lodhi, M. (2011). *Pakistan: Beyond the" crisis State"*. Columbia University Press.

Mourad, S. (2016). *The Mosaic of Islam: A Conversation with Perry Anderson*. Verso Books.

Millet, D., & Toussaint, E. (2013). *Who Owes Who: 50 Questions about World Debt*. London: Zed. Print.

Scanned by CamScanner

Murphy, R. (2017). *Dirty Secrets: How Tax Havens Destroy the Economy*. Verso Books.

Müller, J. (2016). *What is Populism?* University Of Pennsylvania Press.

Nanda, M. (2011). *The God Market: How Globalization is Making India More Hindu*. Monthly Review Press.

Nasr, S. V. R. (2001). *Islamic leviathan: Islam and the making of state power*. Oxford University Press.

Pilisuk, M., & Rountree, J. A. (2015). *The Hidden Structure of Violence: Who Benefits from Global Violence and War*. NYU Press.

Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the 21st Century*. Harvard University Press.

Pappe, I., & Chomsky N. *On Palestine*. Penguin (2015).

Robinson, A. D., & Acemoglu, R. (2012). Why nations fail. *The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty, Nueva Y ork*.

Roy, A., Mishra, P., Bhatt, H., Chatterji, A. P., & Ali, T. (2011). *Kashmir: The case for freedom*. Verso Books.

Roy, A. (2014). *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*. Haymarket Books. Chicago, Illionis.

Tharoor, S. (2016). *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*. Aleph Book Company.

Studwell, J. (2013). *How Asia works: Success and failure in the world's most dynamic region*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc.

Solnit, R. (2014). *Men Explain Things to Me*. Haymarket Book

Smith, J. (2016). *Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century Globalization, Super-Exploitation, and Capitalism's Final Crisis*. Monthly Review Press.

Join Us For EBooks & Notes
Telegram Group t.me/CssAspirantsForum
Facebook Group Name CSS Examination Ebooks & Notes
Whatsapp # +92-310-5454503

Scanned by CamScanner

Acing CSS contains the analyses of forty chosen books in the form of two hundred and forty takeaways. With the aim to provide the young aspirants with original, authentic and diverse content, the book is inundated with scholarly perspectives on issues that matter to the CSS aspirants.

A unique book with an unprecedented utility for CSS aspirants.
-Prof. Muzaffar Bokhari (r), Govt. College University, Lahore

This book can be safely called the 'key to success'.
-Prof. Agha Mohsin (r), Forman Christian College, Lahore.

I believe this book has been missing from the CSS preparation world for a long time. Concise and to the point, the book is highly likely to help you score well in many subjects, with Essay paper being on the top.
-Usman Abdullah, PAS - 17th position

If a year ago someone had asked me what was the single most momentous book to score maximum marks in CSS exams, my answer would have been: there is no such book. After reading Acing CSS, I do have an answer. Good luck!
-Omer Randhawa, PAS - 22nd position

No candidate has the time to read all the 40 books analysed and summed up in Acing CSS. And even if someone manages to achieve this ambitious task, extracting takeaways in the manner found in the book might not be possible. I highly recommend this book.
-Maham Asif, PAS - 23rd position

FOLIO BOOKS
www.foliobooks.pk
Rs 950/-

Scanned by CamScanner